

HARMONIA

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'ESTELLE RUSSELL'



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HARMONIA : A CHRONICLE

VOL. III.

ALZOMAH

1860



HARMONIA

A Chronicle

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"ESTELLE RUSSELL," "JUNIA," "THE NEW VIRGINIANS"
"THE PRIVATE LIFE OF GALILEO," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES

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HARMONIA : A CHRONICLE.

CHAPTER I.

MRS. BONTECOE HEARS SOMETHING.

THE history of the next few weeks would be the history of a hospital ward.

At that end of Harmonia where the street lost itself in the outskirts of the forest, there was a block of buildings which had been run up by a speculator during the last influx of intending settlers, and which had been left unfinished. The roofing was partly on, but there were neither doors nor windows, and though the stairs were up, the railings had not been put in. After an hour's talk with her friends and neighbours on the morning after her arrival, Sylvia went to look at this block, and hired it. The hiring was a small matter. The speculator was glad of a chance of recouping himself for part of his outlay, and only asked twice as much as he would have asked Mrs. Macgregor.

But, when everything was ready, to Sylvia's surprise

and mortification, the sick people's friends refused to let them be taken to the hospital. Had they come out from England to die in an hospital? they asked indignantly. No, if it was God's will they should lay their bones in a foreign land, they must submit; but they would not die paupers.

"Was there ever anything so unreasonable?" Sylvia asked, as she and her friends sat in council.

"Who wants to make paupers of them? We are all pioneers, and isn't it the proper thing for pioneers to help one another?"

"Yes, but you are such a different kind of pioneer," said Mrs. Tregellas.

"I suppose I shall have to go down on my knees and beg them to allow me to nurse them. I know some of them will die if they are not properly nursed."

"That is very probable," said the doctor.

"You hear? Now won't somebody please go and drive a little common sense into these people's heads?"

"Dear Miss Luttrell," said Mrs. Ellacombe, "you don't consider the dislike some of them feel at putting themselves under such a tremendous obligation."

"And they've all paid poors' rates, poor dears, and income tax too, most of 'em," said Eliza mournfully. "'Tis a terrible come down, to have to go to an hospital. No wonder they feel it like."

Thomas, who was standing behind his wife in the doorway, shook his head and groaned. "Iss," he murmured, "ivery wan of 'em has paid poors' rates, like we did; ivery blessed wan of 'em. An' some have druv their gig to market."

"They are foolish, no doubt," said Trelease; "but I assure you, Miss Luttrell, I can sympathize with them. I knew that class very well in England, and I must say that a more independent, deserving class does not exist. I believe they would almost prefer to die than accept charity."

"They had better learn that there are no classes here; in this country we are all equal," said Sylvia with an air of proud conviction. Trelease did not contradict. When a lady speaks *ex cathedrâ* in matters of faith or morals, a gentleman must be very bold indeed to contradict her. Trelease had been reading an account of riots at Pittsburg, and labour troubles at Chicago, and lock-outs in the Eastern States, and thought there were very pretty samples of class antagonism to be met with if one cared to look for them. But Sylvia looked so charming, and uttered her little fallacy with such a delightful air of enunciating a self-evident truth, that Trelease held his tongue and only smiled behind his moustache.

"As likely as not," said Dr. Bontecoe sarcastically; "they think they are Miss Luttrell's superiors."

Sylvia was unprepared for this view of the difficulty, nor did it commend itself to her mind. But she laughed it off, and said, "They may think what they like, if they will only allow themselves to be nursed in the proper way."

"I confess," said Edith, "that while I see their folly, I cannot but sympathize with them. I always sympathize with the *pauvres honteux*. I am a *pauvre honteuse* myself." Edith was very pale, and had grown thin, and

had a tired look in her eyes, but she had never held her head higher or spoken more imperially than when she confessed her fellowship with the shamefaced poor.

When they were all gone except Trelease and Mr. Denning, the latter said—

“Trelease, will you let it be known among these good people that if it should please Providence to afflict me, I shall claim Miss Luttrell’s kindness, and ask to be admitted to her hospital?”

“Dear sir,” said Trelease, “if anything happened to you, I would nurse you day and night.”

“I know you would. But some one must set the example, and I ought to be the one. You will do as I ask you, Trelease?”

Trelease bowed his head. The tears stood in Sylvia’s eyes. Mr. Denning turned to her with a smile: “I have seen you display great patience when you were experimenting with your earthworms. You must be just as patient with these poor people.”

“But it is just because they are not earthworms that I expected a little common sense from them,” said Sylvia.

There is great virtue in a name. Trelease in speaking of the hospital began to call it Miss Luttrell’s house. That helped to modify the people’s dislike to the idea of taking advantage of the aid it was ready to afford, and what helped still more was Mr. Denning’s declaration that he would go there if attacked. Gradually, by ones and twos the stricken ones were brought, always with more or less protest to save their shamefaced pride. In a month, Miss Luttrell’s house was full.

A young doctor from Philadelphia came to assist Dr. Bontecoe, but was soon after taken ill himself, and his was the first death which happened in the hospital.

Mrs. Haverstock fell ill about this time. She declined to see Dr. Bontecoe, and the assistant-surgeon was sent for. But while she was at the worst, he was struck down by the disease, and the Colonel in his despair entreated Dr. Bontecoe to come and see his wife. Dr. Bontecoe went, unwillingly: and even his professional gravity received a shock when the sick woman stretched out her hand and greeted him cordially.

"Ah, you will bring me through, I know," she said. "I have the greatest confidence in you. I had from the first."

The Colonel looked at his son-in-law.

"She thinks I am the other man," said Dr. Bontecoe.

Mrs. Bontecoe had left her mother's side before the doctor entered. Kate remained till he was gone, and then joined her sister, who was standing by a window looking on the road which the doctor would take on his return to Harmonia.

"What did he say about mamma?" Mrs. Bontecoe asked.

"He did not say much. He is looking ill himself," said Kate.

Mrs. Bontecoe watched her husband as he rode past. "He does look ill," she said.

Almost as she spoke Dr. Bontecoe turned and looked up at the house. "Open the window, Flo! speak to him. Say anything. Oh, how slow, how tiresome you are!" cried Kate.

But Mrs. Bontecoe fled from the window, "No, no, not for the world! I hope—I hope he did not see me, and think I was looking out for him."

"Oh, Florence!" said Kate. But she said no more. For ten days Dr. Bontecoe came and went. He was watched by his wife as he rode away, but she always hid herself behind the window-curtain.

Once he met her on the stairs, acknowledged her presence with a nod, and passed on, speaking to the Colonel. A knot rose in her throat. "I suppose he hates me," she thought. Nursing must be their chief trust, he was saying. The Colonel assented, and there were some few words said as they proceeded which Mrs. Bontecoe did not hear. They went out together, and she placed herself at her post of observation behind the curtain.

The doctor had mounted and the Colonel was turning to enter the house when the former spoke.

"By the bye, Colonel"—the Colonel turned again and went up to him—"of course in these cases the patient comes before everything and everybody; but—if it can be managed—don't let Florence do too much." The Colonel nodded and the doctor rode off.

When Kate came into her sister's room a little while after she found her in tears. "Oh, Florence, what is it?" she cried. "Did he say mamma was worse?"

"It was not that," Mrs. Bontecoe said. But she would not explain. "You need not mind my crying," she said. "I should think you were accustomed to it by this time."

The Colonel took care to act so that Dr. Bontecoe's

directions were observed. It had been the custom for Kate to ride into Harmonia to fetch the mail and do the shopping. Now, said the Colonel, her sister should take it in turn with her to go. And she should leave off sitting up at night. Mrs. Bontecoe rebelled, but her rebellion was cut short by a word from her father.

"I am acting on the best advice. Your husband says you need as much fresh air and exercise as you can get."

"I am not under my husband's orders," said she.

"Unfortunately you are not. But you are under your father's orders, and your father expects obedience as long as you live in his house." Mrs. Bontecoe went to make ready for her ride in silence, and the Colonel returned to his wife's room groaning inwardly at the harshness he had been forced to assume. "Ah," he thought as he laid his grey head for rest on a pillow at the foot of the sick woman's bed, "if my poor Cordelia had always pulled with me instead of against me, how much happier might we have been in these five-and-twenty years! I was most to blame, for I never should have surrendered my judgment to hers. I always did so for the sake of peace. And there was no peace."

At first Mrs. Bontecoe felt all the morbid self-consciousness of a recluse, as she rode up the street of Harmonia. But she soon found that people were occupied with their own concerns, and that she was an extremely obscure personage. As the postmaster handed her the Colonel's letters he hoped that Miss Kate was not sick, and the same question was asked at various stores to which she had errands. At the milliner's shop she only found a one-legged man behind the counter. Besides being one-

legged he had lost his right hand, and Mrs. Bontecoe felt a thrill of pity as he tried ineffectually to serve her.

"Ah," he said at last, "I see what you want, but I can't get it. It is on that high shelf, and I'll have to call her after all. She was up nearly all night with a neighbour's sick child, and there's so little doing just now that I told her to lie down and take a nap, I allowed I could 'tend store as well as she could."

The milliner appeared presently, bright and bustling. "Why, of course you couldn't get it. The idea!" she said, hopping up the steps and down again with the box. "Stand away, Dave, you'll lose your balance," she cried as her husband put out his left hand to take the box from her.

"It's mighty inconvenient to be so crippled," the man remarked apologetically to Mrs. Bontecoe.

"Ah, well," said the milliner, "I tell him I'd rather put up with just a piece of him than do without him. He fought all through the war, and I was mighty glad and thankful to get him back—what there was left of him. We've seen a heap of hard times, but we've made out to get along, ain't we, Dave?" The man assented with a smile.

"For Miss Haverstock, you said, ma'am? Now I do hope Miss Kate ain't sick. Miss Kate's always so pleasant."

Mrs. Bontecoe thought the woman's address too familiar. That was Kate's fault; Kate would always chat with the storekeepers. So, in a tone as unlike Kate's as possible, she replied that Miss Haverstock was quite well.

"There goes the doctor and Miss Sylvia," said the husband, who had resumed his seat behind the counter close to the window.

The milliner looked, and Mrs. Bontecoe looked in spite of herself.

"I see 'em pass 'most every day," said the husband. "I heard she was going to send for another doctor from Philadelphia. Dr. Bontecoe's 'most broke down, they say; and no wonder."

"She may be a Yankee," said the milliner, "but she don't spare her money for the sick folks. I will say that for her."

"They say she and the doctor are engaged," said the husband.

"You hush, Dave! They ain't thinking of any such thing. I do admire!"

"Why ——" the man began. But he saw that in his wife's face which commanded silence.

Mrs. Bontecoe paid for her purchase and left the store.

"Well," said the milliner, striking her hands together, "if you ain't a goosey I don't know!"

"What have I done now?" the husband inquired meekly.

"Why as sure as I stand here, that's Miss Kate's sister, and she is the doctor's own wife, and she won't live with him."

"Shoo! She don't favour Miss Kate one par-ticle," said the man.

"No, not till she looks interested, and then you see the likeness. Well," said the little woman with a toss

of her head, as she rolled up her ribbons and put them away, "we'll never see her in this store any more. Can't be helped. Better luck next time, eh, Dave?"

Mrs. Bontecoe walked on with her heart as heavy as lead. She had left her horse tied in front of the grocery while she did her errands up the street, and now as she entered the doorway blinded by the heat and glare, Sylvia ran to her with outstretched hands and kissed her on both cheeks, with eager inquiries after Mrs. Haverstock.

"I know the doctor goes every day, but when I see him there is so much for him to say, and for me to remember, that I often forget to ask till he is gone. Oh!"—and Sylvia clasped her hands and looked upwards—"what we should all do without Dr. Bontecoe I do not know. He keeps us all up. One night last week, I felt perfectly sure that five of my patients were going. I didn't see how the poor things could hold out twenty-four hours longer; and I nearly gave up! One at a time is bad enough; our poor young doctor's death was a dreadful shock; but—five! Miss Priest, who is stouter-hearted than I am, because she doesn't know so much—she nearly gave up too. We just sat down and groaned together. Well, the doctor came in and put us all in good heart again: and we did bring four of them round. So we may be thankful. And how glad I am that I did study medicine. It makes me so much more useful."

"I suppose so," said Mrs. Bontecoe. She hated Sylvia so, that she could hardly command herself to speak with civility.

"I have written to Philadelphia for another assistant," Sylvia pursued. "I tell the doctor he is by far the most valuable person in the settlement, and I'm bound to see he comes to no harm. He is looking dreadfully worn, don't you think so?"

"I am told so. It is natural, I suppose," said Mrs. Bontecoe, trembling with anger, but still trying to be civil.

"Don't look so pale, dear. You needn't feel anxious. I do not think, really, there is anything more the matter with him than extreme fatigue, though of course we know that that is not in itself the best condition for resisting disease. My dear!"—Sylvia slid her fingers on Mrs. Bontecoe's wrist—"you must not sit up at night so much."

Mrs. Bontecoe shrank from the touch of Sylvia's soft hand. "I am very much obliged for the interest you feel in me—and in my husband," she said. "I will wish you good morning." She hurried from the store, leaving Sylvia too much surprised to speak.

"That woman is the most irreclaimable fool I ever did meet," she said to herself when she had recovered her surprise.

By the time Sylvia had gone back to her hospital she had forgotten this incident. There were indeed far more pressing claims on her attention. As she passed from the grocery up the street, people came out from their houses, begging her to come in and say if some member of the household had "the fever," or if it was something else.

"You're mighty nigh as good as the doctor; anyhow

you can tell if it's the fever, or only common chills," they said; and one or two came to ask her to look at their spring. They had heard that the doctor had said something about the springs, but they didn't know it mattered so as the water was clear. Sylvia gave a quick glance at the surroundings; the livery stable was a little higher up the street, which sloped gently down to the houses whose owners had called her in.

"It looks mighty clear," one man said, holding a freshly-drawn dipper of water up to the sunlight for her to examine.

"Won't you taste it? That's from a well; that ain't no spring."

"Not for worlds!" cried Sylvia. "It is poisoned. Look!" In a few telling words she indicated the danger they stood in. "Ask for water, beg for water," she cried, "rather than drink this. I would not drink from that well even though the water were boiled!"

"Well, I do admire!" said one of her hearers.

The owner of the well stood balanced between unbelief and fear. "Now I remember, the doctor did say something like that one day a long time ago; but I declar' I thought he was projecking. Why, ma'am, I paid forty dollars to have that well dug!"

"Do as you like," said Sylvia. "Only, when you get the fever and die of it, as you probably will, don't blame either me or Dr. Bontecoe." She walked on, ready to cry aloud in her despair at their ignorance and unbelief.

"We mought get some ice to put in it. Reckon that mought do just as well as boiling. I know the doctor

did tell some of 'em to boil their water, though I don't remember as he told me," said the owner of the well.

"A drop of sarsaparilla might keep it," said one.

"Well, I believe in wild-cherry wine myself," said another. And then the knot of loafers dispersed, the women to their business indoors, the men to stand in the doorways and give good-day to the passers-by.

The next few days were very sad. Mr. Denning fell ill and was taken to the hospital, and Sylvia could tell by the expression of Dr. Bontecoe's countenance that he thought there would be a fatal ending. Mrs. Lovett and her husband were ill, and Mrs. Bloss; and Mrs. Macfarlane and Edith and Mrs. Macgregor took it in turns to nurse them and cook for their households; for the negro servants were too demoralized to do their work. There were one or two cases of illness at the Quarters, and they spent their time between protracted meetings at the negro church there, and visits to the crowded cabins where the sick lay. Mrs. Bloss, when she was well enough to speak, expressed her preference for Mrs. Macfarlane's nursing. "Mis' Macgregor fusses around too much," she said, "and Mis' Tregellas gets tired fanning me sooner than you do." So gradually the chief nursing of Mrs. Bloss fell to Mrs. Macfarlane, and Mrs. Macgregor confined herself to the cooking, while Edith went around among the people who, like Mrs. Lovett, declared they would rather die than go to the hospital.

CHAPTER II.

SHALL WE TRY AGAIN ?

MRS. BONTECOE urged her pony onwards, regardless of the dust and heat and glare. She went as though she were escaping from an enemy. She told herself that Sylvia Luttrell was the worst enemy a poor woman ever had. She did not question the truth of what the milliner's husband had said. People in that class of life knew a great deal more about their betters than their betters knew about them. Should her husband be trying to get a divorce from her, it was likely he would succeed in a country where divorce could be procured on almost any pretext. And she—what would she be then? It had been her pride so to bear herself that no blame should attach to her. She had lived the life of a recluse in her father's house, in her determination that her husband should not have it in his power to say a word against her. And was this, then, to be the end? Was she to become a thing as despised as a Hindoo widow? If her husband got a divorce from her, it seemed to her that she could never look upon her father's face again. She would

find some hole in which to hide herself until she died.

"He will think I brought it all on myself, though he may not say so," thought the miserable woman, as she hurried on, never heeding the heat nor the pony's stumbling; though at another time, either the one thing or the other would have given her a nervous attack. As soon as she reached home she hastened to her room. She had taken off her riding habit and was walking up and down wringing her hands, when Kate opened the door softly and came in, begging her to be still, for their mother could hear the footsteps and seemed disturbed by the sound.

"When you are rested I should like to take a nap," said Kate, who looked very weary and heavy-eyed.

"I will come—presently," Mrs. Bontecoe said, beginning hastily to dress.

"I can wait till the afternoon if you are very tired," said Kate, sinking into an armchair. "You don't look well, Flo. Was the heat too much for you? Oh, if it would but rain!"

"It is not the heat; it is—oh, Kate!—how can I tell you? They say Rupert is engaged to that woman—to Miss Luttrell."

"That is quite impossible. How can he?" said Kate, sitting up and opening her eyes very wide. "And who are 'they'?"

Mrs. Bontecoe told her in a choking voice what the milliner's husband had said.

"You should not mind such gossip," said Kate. Yet she did think there might be something in it; divorces

were so easily procured in America. And how much better a wife would Miss Luttrell be for the doctor than her own foolish sister.

"I saw her just afterwards," said Mrs. Bontecoe. "She actually had the audacity to kiss me! and kept on talking about the doctor, and how worn out he was, and how she valued him; as much as to say, 'I know what his worth is if you do not.' And then such a pretence of interest in *me*!" And she cried aloud in her anguish.

"If you could have made up your mind to go back to him!" said Kate, with a sigh.

"Oh, why talk of that? I know he hates me. When I met him on the stairs he couldn't give me a civil 'good morning.' Oh, if I could but take the fever and die instead of mamma! Will she die, Kate, do you think?"

"I do not believe Rupert himself knows yet."

"It will be worse for me than for you, if she dies. As I sat by her the other night I thought, if it had not been for her encouragement, I should never have left Rupert. I might have had an idea of leaving him when he put me out very much indeed, but I never should have had the courage to do it if she had not upheld me. And see what my life has been since then! Have I been happy? Even had we been always quarrelling, I believe I should not have been quite as miserable as I have been since we separated. I have thought so for a long time."

"Poor Florence," said Kate.

"And so, if she dies, I shall be always thinking

whenever I think of her, that it was by her encouragement I made the greatest mistake of my life. If I am miserable till my life ends, it was her fault."

"Why do you say such horrible things?" said Kate, shuddering.

"If they sound horrible to you, how much more horrible must they be to me who feel them? Do you wonder that I wish myself dead?"

"Oh," said Kate, with a sigh, "I don't know. They say while there is life there is hope, and I suppose that applies to other things besides sickness."

"Not in my case," said her sister.

"Do you know what I would do if I were you? I do not suppose you hate him, really?"

"N—o. I don't wish him harm, at any rate."

"Do you go so far as to wish him well?"

"I suppose I wish him well in a general way."

"Well, why do you not get a divorce from him, instead of waiting for him to get a divorce from you?"

Mrs. Bontecoe looked aghast. Kate went on:—

"Don't you see that it would have such a different appearance if you got the divorce yourself? Can't you see it?"

"But—we should be finally separated from each other," said Mrs. Bontecoe in a whisper.

"Of course you would. But, my dear Flo, just look at the common sense of the thing. You can't and won't live with him. He asked you, and you refused, and I quite see, myself, that once having refused you are done for. I shouldn't like going on my knees to the best man in the world; let alone Rupert. Well, there you are!

Now, I do not imagine he has been breaking his heart about you all these years, because men don't do that kind of thing. They know better. Still, I suppose there are moments when he wishes he had not let you go quite so easily. I don't imagine Rupert is a bit more of a hermit by nature than other men are."

"How do you know?"

"I remember at any rate that once he was very much in love with you. But now, perhaps from thinking that he might have done better, he has come to think he would try again if he had the chance."

"To marry that woman!" exclaimed Mrs. Bontecoe.

"Why not? He gave you your chance, and you refused. You say you hate her, and I don't wonder. But she is a very charming woman for all that, and cleverer than a dozen of us put together."

"And you say this to my face!"

"I really think you would be happier if you were to set him free. He then could make another choice if he wished, and you—you are quite young still,—and you are pretty, and you might meet with some one who had not a dreadful temper. Some men are good-tempered enough. Look at papa. Why should you not give yourself another chance?"

"I? Never! never! Oh, how little you understand, Kate! How little you understand!"

"Well," said Kate, rising, "I see the common-sense of the thing: and as to my not understanding, that is all bosh, you know."

That night Kate who was sitting up, fell asleep from fatigue. Her sister, who could not sleep for thinking of

what she had heard about her husband, came into the room about two o'clock and sent her to bed. As it often happens to nervous people who are troubled with insomnia, she who when lying in her bed was unable to sleep for the crowding of ideas, felt sleep overcoming her now that she was sitting up, with the duty before her of keeping awake. It was Sunday morning, and she tried to read the Bible, but knowing the words as she did, almost by heart, they were to her as an oft told tale. She read a chapter as a Catholic mumbles her rosary; and presently she fell asleep, and slept on through the twitter of the awakening birds, and the harsh cry of the jar-fly, welcoming the new day.

Dr. Bontecoe had been called a little after midnight to a patient, and was returning to Harmonia. He felt jaded, and his horse was jaded, and as he rode slowly homewards, it occurred to him that if he went to see Mrs. Haverstock then, it would obviate the retracing of a good many steps later in the day. The negroes were still asleep in their cabin, so he brought his horse inside the fence, where he could nibble the dried-up grass in the fence corners, and walked towards the house. The doors and windows were all open, and the gentle morning wind swayed the curtains to and fro. There was no other sound or movement in the house, and the doctor stepped softly as he passed the threshold. He went up stairs to the sick chamber, and found the patient in a doze, and his wife fast asleep with her head on the open Bible. He sat down in the armchair by the bed, expecting that some one would come in before long if his wife did not wake. Mrs. Haverstock, who had been uttering

unconnected words in the intervals of her doze, now opened her eyes and said with great distinctness:—"The Colonel was perfectly right. A wife's place is with her husband." She looked steadily at the doctor for an instant without recognition, and closed her eyes again.

"Rather late in the day to have found that out," was his inward comment. He crossed the room to look at his wife, who still slept on with her head on the book. She had always been pale and fragile-looking, but now her cheeks were becoming hollow, and her left hand which hung over the arm of her chair, was so thin that her wedding ring was slipping off her finger. She shivered as she slept, and Dr. Bontecoe took a knitted shawl which lay on the back of a chair and put it over her. She seemed to sleep the sounder for it, and he sat down again to wait.

As he sat he could not but think of their sad relations to each other. It had been one of his maxims "never to cry for spilt milk," and he had carried out his maxim fairly. But now, with the woman sitting there so near that he could almost touch her,—so near, so dear, as she might have been—so infinitely removed from him as she was,—he began to reflect, whether he would or no, on the pity of it.

Why had they made such a muddle of their two lives? Why had that old woman interfered and made everything worse? Why had he let her interfere? Why had he not had the sense to take his wife away, anywhere, so that she was removed from Mrs. Haverstock's influence. They would have learnt then to pull together.

He would have found it easier to mould her to his liking; and when she asserted her own will in opposition to his, he would not have put himself into such violent antagonism, because he would have had no reason for feeling that Mrs. Haverstock was the motive power, and that his wife was only a puppet repeating her little maxims at second hand.

"My poor Flo!" he said to himself, looking sadly at the wedding ring which hung so loosely on the thin white finger. "If we could but try again, I think I would not make quite such a muddle of it. I was a fool to let you go; I ought to have known better. One never does know better till it is too late. To be sure, I was rough spoken now and then, but why should she fear me to such a degree? The way she shrinks from me is painful."

He sighed and turned away, muttering, "Well, well, it is no good." The movement and the increasing light together roused Mrs. Bontecoe from her sleep, and she started up from her chair and looked round bewildered. Her ring fell off, but in her distress at finding that she had been asleep instead of watching, and her surprise at seeing Dr. Bontecoe standing near her, she was unconscious of its loss. Dr. Bontecoe, however, noted the place to which it had rolled, and while he asked her the reason of her sitting up, he stooped for it and slipped it into his pocket.

"Kate was so tired she could hardly keep awake; and I could not sleep when I was in bed. I don't know why I should have gone to sleep now: I feel ashamed of myself."

"I said you were not to sit up," said the doctor in a low voice, but peremptorily.

Mrs. Bontecoe explained that the sitting up—if it could be called sitting up—was entirely her own doing. "You have no idea how tired Kate is," she said, "and so is papa. And if mamma dies I do not want to feel that I did not do everything for her that I could."

"Why do you not have a nurse?" said the doctor, after a pause.

"The negroes cannot be trusted, and Mrs. Rosevear is engaged at the hospital."

"I will write to Boston and engage a nurse for you."

"You must not do that. We—papa I mean—cannot afford the terms those trained lady nurses ask." Mrs. Bontecoe flushed slightly as she spoke and looked down. Then for the first time she became aware of the loss of her ring. She looked startled, and the doctor saw her eyes wander anxiously over the floor.

The sick woman stirred uneasily, and her daughter went up to the bed. Again Mrs. Haverstock opened her eyes and said, looking straight before her:—"The Colonel is perfectly right. A wife's place is with her husband." A crimson flush dyed Mrs. Bontecoe's pale face. To cover her confusion she said to the doctor, "How do you think she is this morning?"

Before he could answer, the door opened and Kate came in. There was a whispered question and answer, and Kate going up to the bed, said, "I do think she looks better."

The doctor thought so too, but he was reluctant to say so, knowing how fast a hold the malady still kept on

his patient. He gave his instructions; Kate listened and asked a question or two; and then begged him to come down stairs and have a cup of coffee. She had heard the Colonel stirring: he always lit his spirit lamp and got coffee for them, long before the negro servants had breakfast ready. "Just one minute, Flo; and I will swallow my coffee and be back again," she said as she left the room.

To hide her embarrassment Mrs. Bontecoe busied herself in trying to make her mother more comfortable. She got a fresh pillow, but having so little strength she was unable to lift her mother's head. Had she been alone, she would have tried again; but, looking up she saw her husband's eyes fixed, as she thought, on her left hand.

"Oh, I will leave that for Kate," she murmured. The doctor moved forward a step, raised the patient's head and signed to her to pass the pillow underneath it.

"Thanks," said Mrs. Bontecoe in a whisper. Their hands had touched; she might have clasped his in hers had she dared. She retreated to the window and looked out, trying to still the fluttering of her heart, and wishing that he would go, so that she might look for her ring. She could not doubt that he with his sharp eyes had seen that it was not on her finger; he would think that she did not choose to wear it; and he would go away and tell that woman that his wife had left off wearing her wedding ring!

She stood, her right hand clasping her left, her whole mind absorbed in her loss and what its consequences might be to her. Kate had not been gone five minutes,

but to her misery the time seemed an hour. The doctor had come behind her; she was too much absorbed to be aware of it till she heard his voice, not whispering, but subdued to the tone of half-confidence usual in a sick chamber.

"Do you know that you have lost your ring?" he said.

"It must have dropped off while I was asleep," she said. "I had no idea—I always wear it,—always. I should never think of leaving it off—never," she repeated; forgetting to whisper in her agitation. "What shall I do if I don't find it!" she exclaimed, looking on the floor. "What shall I do?"

She went back to the window and leaned for support against the sill. Her husband followed her and said:—"Florence!"

"It did slip off, I do assure you," she said. "I never would have left it off. Whatever you think of me, do not think that."

"I know it slipped off. You dropped it just before you woke."

"You found it? Oh, give it back; please, please give it back," she implored with tears in her eyes.

He took it from his pocket and turned it round between his finger and thumb. "It is much too large for you now," he said.

"I am getting so thin," she murmured.

Still he continued to look at it. "Ah, I wed you with this ring once. That is one of the 'Has beens,' I suppose."

She held out her hand for it. She was past speaking.

"Shall I put it on?"

She held out her left hand. He placed the ring on her finger and held it there for an instant. "You will have to wear a tighter one to keep it on. What have you done with that diamond keeper I gave you?" he asked.

"I have it safe—quite safe," she whispered.

He stood before her, and looked at her as she stood with her face downcast, and her right hand clasped tightly over her left. And between them both stood the ghost of their dead love, and the remembrance of the quarrels and recriminations which had killed it.

"Ah," he said abruptly, "I was very much in love when I bought that keeper.—Well—good morning!"

He went down stairs, and Kate presently re-entered the room.

"I cannot think what should be the matter with Rupert," she remarked, as she looked at her mother. "He said the symptoms were much more favourable, and yet he looked—I do not know how he looked.—I hope he is not going to be ill."

Dr. Bontecoe mounted and rode away, and his thoughts kept pace with the horse's footsteps. A word had been on the tip of his tongue, and he had not said it. What dumb devil had possessed him that he had left the room with that word unspoken? So easily said too, and so naturally as it would have come when he was putting the ring on her finger! It would have been the right word in the right place; and instead of that, what had he said? Something supremely idiotic, whatever it was.

What dumb devil had possessed him? He said aloud

what he would have said then, but did not. How easy it seemed! "Shall we try again, Flo?"

But there was nobody within hearing; not even a friendly messenger such as Kate would have been, to carry the word back to his wife. The doctor checked his horse, which had had a feed in the Colonel's stable and was doing his best to show his gratitude for an unexpected early breakfast. "What did I say when first I entered that house? 'That she should beg on her knees before I'd take her back again.' And more fool I for saying it. I might have known better; she is not the sort of woman to do that. Well, if I ever do get the chance again—but I never shall. That was the first time I have seen her to speak to in all these weeks."

He rode on feeling downcast and vexed, but as he drew bridle before his own door his face brightened.

"I'll talk to Kate about it. To think of my forgetting that good little Kate!"

Neither the next day nor the day after did the doctor appear at the Haverstocks' place. On the afternoon of the second day the Colonel rode into Harmonia to see him and ask for directions. The Colonel and Kate said to each other that Rupert must be ill; they were sure that nothing else would have prevented his coming. They did not say so to Mrs. Bontecoe, but the same thought was in her mind, and it gave her no rest. "What would be done with him if he fell ill?" she asked herself. "Would he stay in his own little house?" Kate had been inside it once or twice with the Colonel, and had said how neglected and dirty it was under the management of the negro servants. Would

Mr. Trelease have time to nurse him ? Mr. Trelease was said to be helping to nurse some of the English who would not go to the hospital. Or—would he allow himself to be taken to the hospital to be nursed by—that woman ?

She had imagined sometimes that never a woman had lived, so miserable as herself ; but when she thought of her husband, ill within half a mile of her, nursed back to life, or nursed till his death, by Sylvia Luttrell ; grateful—if he recovered—to Sylvia ; giving last messages—if he had sense to give any—to Sylvia ;— when she thought of such possibilities as these, it seemed to her that her misery had reached that lowest depth, compared to which all her former misery had been bliss.

When she heard her father tell Kate in the afternoon that he was going to ride into Harmonia to see what had become of the doctor, she placed herself where she would meet him on his way out. “ Papa, please wait a moment,” she said.

The Colonel reined in his horse. She came up close and spoke with downcast looks, like a shy frightened child—“ Would you mind—I know you *can* observe people when you like :—would you mind observing how Rupert is looking ;—I mean whether he is really looking very ill. I wish to know particularly how he is.” Then, looking up for an instant,—“ Papa, cannot you understand that it will be very sad for me if anything happens to Rupert ? ”

The Colonel put out his hand and pressed hers.

“ It would be very, very sad,” she repeated. “ I do

not know how I should bear it. Because—of course you must understand that I should not feel exactly as if Rupert were like any ordinary person.”

The Colonel was silent for a moment. At last he said :—“ I pray God to bless you, my dear child, whatever happens.”

“ You need not pray any such prayer,” she cried. “ There is no blessing for me ; none, none ! ” Then with sudden transition to entreaty, as she saw the shocked look that passed over her father’s face :—“ Never mind what I said. Kate doesn’t mind, and I say all sorts of things to her. And—you need not let *him* know that I wanted to know how he was looking.”

“ You would not wish me to give anything like a message ?

Mrs. Bontecoe recoiled. “ Not for worlds ! My dear father, what are you thinking of ? ”

“ I suppose,” thought the Colonel, “ that is what people call ‘ proper pride.’ Well, dear,” he said aloud, “ it is written that he who humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

“ That has nothing to do with my case,” she answered. “ Because I wish—naturally—to know how Dr. Bontecoe is looking, it by no means follows that I should send him messages.”

“ Well,” said the Colonel, as he moved off slowly, “ I hope I understand. I am to observe his looks and report to you thereon ; and I am by no means to give any message from you.”

“ I feel that I ought to behave with proper dignity and reticence,” she said.

"I trust that my daughter will never behave in any other way," said he as he rode off.

It was quite dark before he returned, and Mrs. Bontecoe heard him go into the dining-room and throw himself into a chair with a groan, as of one weary and dispirited. She went down stairs as soon as she could, and spoke to him. "You saw Rupert?"

"Yes. I sat there till he was called out."

"How was he looking?"

"I thought him looking very ill."

"I hope he will not be ill," said Mrs. Bontecoe, in a low voice.

"He said he should break down unless he could get some rest. For two nights he has had no sleep. That was why he did not come here to-day or yesterday. This has been going on for weeks; besides which the poor fellow has not fit food to eat. He is half starved."

"He is not so poor as that, I am sure," exclaimed Mrs. Bontecoe.

"It is not poverty; it is that the food he gets is not adapted to an overworked, jaded man. Everything fried, everything done up in grease! The very bread made up with lard! It is enough to give one dyspepsia to think of it. And the general discomfort; not even a cup of tea ready when he wants it! Trelease did manage a little for him, but now Trelease is away so much helping the sick he is about as uncomfortable as a man can be."

The Colonel had spoken with unusual energy; and had taken off his glasses, which he only did when he was saying something important.

Mrs. Bontecoe was silent all the evening, thinking how it would be if Rupert were to fall ill and die, and her father should think it her fault because she had not been in her place, keeping the household in the right way and attending to his comfort! When they separated for the night the Colonel said:—"I do not wish you to relieve me before five o'clock. Your husband's last words to me were that you should get your full night's rest."

"I shall be sure to wake at five; I will come in then," she replied submissively, and went to her room. Soon the whole house was silent.

After an hour's tossing on her bed, Mrs. Bontecoe rose and dressed herself; then she went softly down the creaking stairs and out of doors. The heat had abated, and there was a slight dew. She hurried by the negro cabin in front of which the dog slept. He barked, but she spoke softly to him, and he rose and wagged his tail and followed her a few steps. She had wished for his company, but when she reached the fence he gave a yawn, stood still for a minute, wagged his tail in apology, and turned back to his mat. She was half afraid to go on, and stood still for a little while. But the picture of her husband in dire discomfort rose before her, and she opened the gate and walked hurriedly on the road to Harmonia.

Every human sound was hushed, and the whirr of nocturnal beetles, the rasping note of the crickets, and the distant bark of a dog challenging one still more distant, came on the stillness with fourfold intensity.

She went on, looking narrowly at her path, in mortal fear of snakes, and trembling with the excitement of her undertaking. By the time she had reached Harmonia she was as a thing encompassed by fears. For now that she was close to her husband's house she began to ask herself the question, "What if he should reject me?"

She sat down on a doorstep trembling at the thought. She knew it was the worst thing she could do to give way to nervousness. She had arranged a certain formula in her own mind; she intended to begin in a way that would show she meant to hold out the olive branch, but that she did not mean to grovel. She kept on saying to herself, "It is not I who have done wrong. It was all his temper—all! I never did wrong, and I will not beg his pardon. Whatever I do or say I will not grovel." As she approached the house she heard footsteps, and hid herself in a doorway. She stood with her face to the door till the person should have passed. It was Trelease, who went straight to the house and walked in. She followed slowly till she came to the window; then, standing a little out of the lamplight, she looked in.

Trelease had come apparently to get some clothes. He had pulled a trunk out into the middle of the room and was throwing the contents out in every direction. When he had found what he wanted, he put the things back pell-mell, jumped on them to flatten them, and relocked the trunk. Then he lit the fire on the hearth, set the kettle on, and brought out a couple of cups and saucers from the cupboard, and a tin of crackers.

When he had done that he began to make the room tidy. It was time. The doctor's books, the doctor's papers, and the doctor's boots, were in a heap on the floor. Apparently they had been shunted off the sofa, which had a blanket spread over it as if it had been used as a bed. The floor which had been painted to imitate oak, was covered with dust and footmarks. The table was littered with papers and letters, and the remains of some former meal, on which myriads of flies had settled. As Mrs. Bontecoe regarded the scene, with a sense of wonder that a human being should be able to go on existing in such discomfort, the door opened and the doctor came in.

"Well, old man," and "Well, old fellow," was their laconic greeting. Trelease put a handful of tea into a large teapot and presently poured it out. Their talk was in low murmured tones, and once or twice the doctor put his hand to his head as if he were weary.

He did look ill; Colonel Haverstock had not exaggerated. Mrs. Bontecoe felt that his looks—as she saw him now—would justify her fully in offering to return to him; there need be no question in her own mind as to grovelling. Then, if he did reject her offer, she could tell her father—no one else—and feel herself justified before him. Having at length screwed up her courage, it was in the last degree tantalising to have to wait. What if Mr. Trelease should intend staying there all night? If she once went back, she did not think she would ever have courage to come again.

But, the tea being drunk, the friends rose, Trelease took up his bag, and Dr. Bontecoe took the lamp and

approached the door. Once more Mrs. Bontecoe shrank within a doorway.

"I will lock the door after you," the doctor said.

"How different the stars look here from what they do in England," Trelease remarked, looking upwards; "And what a day it has been!"

"Stifling," said Dr. Bontecoe.

"I could not conceive of such heat till I felt it. How the sick live through it, I cannot tell."

"We do live through a vast deal," said the doctor. "Good-night. I suppose I shall see you at the usual time to-morrow morning."

"Yes. It is to-morrow morning," said Trelease, looking at his watch. "I must go."

He passed close to Mrs. Bontecoe: but he did not seem to notice her, and she, after waiting a moment, again approached her husband's door. He had closed it, and was preparing to bolt it when she knocked tremulously. He heard the knock, and said with his hand on the bolt, "Who's there?" She tried to answer, but her voice died away in her throat, and she could only knock.

"Who is it?" he cried impatiently, throwing the door open.

She forgot everything she had been going to say. She could only gasp, "Rupert!"

"Florence!" was his exclamation. "Is your mother worse? Come in. Come in here," he repeated, leading the way to the sitting-room from which he had just come. She followed him, and when he bade her sit down she obeyed. "Now what is it?" he repeated, seating himself opposite her.

"I—I don't think mamma is worse," she faltered. "It is not that."

"Then what in the name of common sense could make you wander here at this time of night?" he exclaimed, rising and pushing back his chair.

She held up her hands. "Rupert!" she cried, and fell forward on her knees before him.

"They said you would be ill," she sobbed. "And I knew that if you died, I should never—never forgive myself—if I let you be nursed by strangers. I should never forgive myself as long as I lived. I *am* your wife, Rupert, after all, and you were fond of me once."

He made her rise and put her in her chair. "Don't distress yourself," he said. "Try to be calm, Florence."

"How can I be calm?" she said. "Do you suppose I have had a day's happiness since I left you?"

"Well—you did it to please yourself."

He had been standing by the table as he spoke. She went up to him and said eagerly:—

"I never made a greater mistake. It was thinking of that—the mistake of it,—that made me so unhappy. But—if you will take me back—only as a servant—so that I may look after things and keep you from being so uncomfortable—indeed I shall be happier, even like that, than I have been for a long while."

"Florence, my poor little wife!" he cried, taking her in his arms.

A little while after when they were seated together on the sofa he said:—"Do you know what I was very

near saying the day before yesterday, when I put on your ring for you?"

"What was it?" she said.

"I was very near saying 'Shall we try again, Flo?' But a dumb devil took possession of me, and I left it unsaid."

"So I had to come and say it instead," she said, smiling.

"Rupert!" she said presently.

"Well, dear."

"I'll never go away from you again, not even if you beat me."

He bowed his head on hers. No word she could have uttered would have been such a reproach. How must he have acted that she should have been so afraid of him? He made then a vow to himself, that he would so govern his temper, that she should never feel afraid of him again.

It was near sunrise next morning when the Colonel saw his eldest daughter enter the house in walking attire, covered with dust. He was descending the stairs, and they met at the door of the sitting-room.

"Have you been waiting for me?" she inquired.

"No, my child, but I am glad to see that you have been walking. Where have you been?"

He began to light the spirit lamp as he spoke. "Oh, papa," she said, "sit down a moment and let me tell you. I have been to ask Rupert to take me back. And—and—" she knelt down beside her father and laid her head on his knee—"I do believe he is fond of

me, after all : and I have promised never to leave him any more, no matter what happens."

The Colonel took her hands in both his, and she knew that he was praying.

"Florence," he said at last, "I shall be much happier for this, when I come to die."

CHAPTER III.

MR. DENNING'S CONFESSION.

As soon as Mr. Denning was pronounced out of danger he was moved to his own house to make room for more urgent cases, and his friends of the West Country came and nursed him. One and all they tried to make him forget that he was a lonely old man, a stranger in a strange land. Yet, while he thanked them for their services, there would come into his face a look of perplexity, as if he had lost something and knew not where to seek it.

"You are kind and good," he said one day to Edith; "almost as kind and good as my poor Polly." And then there came again into his face that look of perplexity. "Every one is kind," he said, "but why do they keep my poor Polly away from me?"

"Perhaps—she cannot come," Edith ventured to say.

He sighed and was silent.

Edith, full of sad forebodings, told Eliza of what he had said, adding, "You see he has not regained his senses yet."

But Eliza exclaimed, "Oh, ma'am, it's his missus

he's asking for. Her christened name was Mary, and he's forgotten that she is dead. Poor gentleman!"

They redoubled their care and assiduity. Eliza gave up her post at the hospital that she might be at his call night and day.

"You needn't tell about wages," she said, when Edith assured her she should not be a loser by what she had done. "I'm thinking about his poor soul, and I'm praying for him constant, and so I have ever since he was took bad. For who knows whether he's prepared? Oh my dear, sin has to be repented of."

"Eliza!" said Edith, "how can you speak so uncharitably? You do not know for a fact that he has anything special to repent of, and you do know how like a saint he has behaved all through his illness. For days he hardly opened his lips except in prayer. I do not believe there is a better man in Harmonia than he. Do keep your uncharitable thoughts to yourself."

"Iss, my dear. I ain't going to say nothing; but I'm going on praying for him. Night and day I will; night and day."

One night when it was Eliza's turn to sit up, she had gone to the farthest corner of the room to pray. The lamp was so shaded that she had believed herself unseen, but when she rose from her knees and looked towards the bed, she saw her patient's eyes fixed on her with sad inquiry.

"Did you call for anything, sir?" she asked, fearing lest she might not have heard him speak.

He looked at her for a moment without apparent recognition; then he said:—"Pray, good woman; pray

for me, that I may soon be released from the burden of my life in this sad world."

Eliza waited, not knowing what to say. Presently he began to speak to himself.—"If they accuse me falsely, I shall not heed it in my grave. The half of my goods have I given to the poor, and if I wronged any man I restored him fourfold. Let that speak for me. Let my whole life speak for me. Why ask more?" Then he turned himself, and appeared to sleep uneasily; but he said no more that night.

Eliza was perplexed. She believed the man to be a sinner; but instead of repenting, he was justifying himself.

Mr. Denning recovered so far as to sit daily in his armchair by the window and to receive visits from his friends.

He even attempted to resume his translation of the *Ramayana*. But though the books were beside him constantly, he made little progress. Trelease, who was with him daily, saw that as soon as he had written a few lines, he would appear to fall into a reverie, and then would write—on common notepaper—something which when evening was come, he would carefully burn. And so it went on. One evening, as they sat together in the twilight, Mr. Denning startled Trelease by asking when it was that Garlick died.

"He is not dead; at least, I hope not," said Trelease.

"Then why does he not come to see me?" asked the old man with a pained look. "Has he turned his back on me like all my other friends?"

"He went away in the spring. And—there is no

one in Harmonia that has so many friends as you, sir," said Trelease.

"Everybody is very kind. I feel sometimes that a lifetime would hardly repay all their kindness. There is one that reminds me of my poor Polly. Ah! I forgot; you did not know her. But—I want to see Garlick. I must see Garlick before I die."

"Shall I write to him?" said Trelease.

"Yes. Tell him what I said. Tell him to make haste."

When the letter was written there was a difficulty about the address. It had been given to Mr. Denning in the only letter Mr. Garlick had written, just before the starting of the expedition. This letter Mr. Denning had mislaid, and he could not remember the contents of it.

Trelease went to Sylvia, hoping she would know. She exclaimed that a letter would take too long, they must send a telegram, and insisted on paying for it herself. She had heard the name of the town from which Mr. Garlick had written to Mr. Denning and she remembered it perfectly. The telegram was sent, and there was nothing to do but wait for the answer. But Mr. Denning seemed so unhappy when Trelease said the letter was not gone, that he sent that too. And almost every day the old man would ask how long before an answer could reach Harmonia.

"Do not think me impatient," he said. "I must see Garlick before I die."

One evening after Trelease had laid down the English newspaper which he had been reading aloud, Mr. Denning said:—

"It has for years been a matter of doubt with me, how far it is right to shield the guilty."

"I should be afraid to say it was ever right to do so," said Trelease.

"I am in doubt," said Mr. Denning. "It is a question on which my mind swings first this way and then that."

"There is always the chance," said Trelease, "that if the guilty be not made to bear his own burden, some innocent person may have to bear it for him. Now injustice is bad always, but to my mind there is nothing so horrible as that the innocent should be made to suffer as if guilty; while the guilty one goes scot free."

"Yes, it is horrible," said Mr. Denning. He was silent for a moment, then he added, "But the innocent man is always conscious of his innocence, and the consciousness of innocence is a support. And—there may be cases when it becomes a duty to bear the odium of guilt, even though innocent."

"I do not believe that it can ever be the duty of an innocent man to bear the odium of another's guilt. Our own sins are quite heavy enough without assuming what are not ours. Why, I would as soon believe in works of supererogation! The one belief does not seem to me a whit more preposterous than the other."

"You appear to have thought on the subject," said Mr. Denning.

Trelease said he had been brought to think of it by reading the account of a play being acted in a London theatre, in which a young man allows himself to be

saddled with a crime that his dearest friend had committed. "It was an adaptation from a French play; full of false sentiment, as those plays usually are," said he. "The young man was made out to be a hero, but in his heroism I could see nothing but moral cowardice. If he had but spoken one word, none would have believed him to be the criminal. His life from that time became an acted lie, and all because he had not the courage to declare, 'I am not the thief,' lest his friend should be caught."

Mr. Denning sat up in his chair and looked interested. "Ah, yes, to say that would require courage—a great deal of courage in some cases. Can you not conceive of a case in which it might be beyond a man's courage?"

"Well," said Trelease slowly, "I hardly can. A man has a duty to himself. And I am very sure of this," he continued. "By acting thus a man must for ever destroy his power to do good. And—would the friend for whom he suffered opprobrium be worth the suffering? What kind of friend would he be who would let his innocent friend bear the disgrace of his guilt? He would be the vilest of mankind; he would be the innocent man's worst enemy."

"Yes," said Mr. Denning, whose head was bowed, and who seemed exhausted. "His worst enemy. You are right there."

It was some time before he spoke again. Then he murmured, "I should like to see Garlick. Tell him I want to see him before I die."

Trelease went to him and took his hand. "I fear

Garlick cannot be here yet, sir. Is there anything I can do for you ? ”

“ I am in doubt. I cannot make up my mind,” said Mr. Denning with a piteous look. “ I have always tried to do the right thing, and how if it be not right after all ? ”

“ God knows whether a thing be right. Ask Him,” said Trelease, trembling at his own temerity in offering spiritual advice to the man whom he looked on as a saint.

“ Ah,” said Mr. Denning, beating his fingers on the table, “ God knows.—But I do not know. Shall I ever know, this side of the grave ? Shall I speak, or hold my peace ?—God knows.”

Trelease was silent. Had Mr. Denning been one of the people whom he had but lately helped to nurse through their sickness, his way would have been clear before him. He would have bidden the sick person speak and ease his overburdened mind ; he would have reminded him that he was privileged by his priestly office to hear those griefs that cannot be told to the outside world ; and to offer counsel to the assuaging of them. But what was he that he should speak thus to such an one as Mr. Denning, a man old enough to be his father ; saintly in his life, the embodiment of charity ; full of learning ; whom, for the help and light he had afforded him in his own mental difficulties, he had come to regard as his spiritual father. Had he but known such an one as Mr. Denning in England, would he have committed such a mad act as to throw up his curacy ? But alas ! his superior had been impatient,

almost infuriate, at his lamely expressed doubts ; whereas Mr. Denning was patience itself. Mr. Denning had helped him to put into clear language the doubt itself, and then to demolish it. It filled Trelease with distress that now his span of life was nearly out, this man of all others should express his want of a counsellor in what could not well be other than a case of conscience.

"If you are in doubt, surely God will help you," he said at last. "God never turns a deaf ear to the prayer of His servants. And are you not His servant?" and then he stopped, feeling it a presumption to have said so much.

"I thought so once," said Mr. Denning, "but now the heavens seem as brass. Oh what a blessed thing it is to have hope and youth!—Hope and youth.—No burden on the back like the Old Man of the Sea, galling you unceasingly ; eternal spring in your muscles, and no nerves !"

Trelease ventured to say, "I have been unconscious of nerves, as yet ; but I have been depressed by doubts. And if I see my way clearer now, it is thanks to you, sir."

Mr. Denning answered in his usual gentle tone:—"Is that so ? I remember now : we used to talk a great deal before I was ill. I fear my memory is not quite as clear as it should be. If I have helped to solve your doubts, I am glad ; nay, thankful."

"Indeed, indeed you have helped greatly," said Trelease, pressing his friend's hand. "The whole tone and bias of my mind has changed since I found good counsel with you."

Mr. Denning was silent for a moment; then he said as if speaking to himself:—"Then I have not been wholly bereft of influence for good, after all."

Trelease, feeling uneasy as to his friend's condition, took the first opportunity of speaking to Dr. Bontecoe. By the doctor's advice he absented himself for a day or two, and allowed his place to be filled by Tregellas. But Tregellas came to him one evening telling him that Mr. Denning had been asking for him repeatedly. He went to him at once.

On the table by the old man's side lay a tin box with papers in it. The first word he asked was about Garlick's return. Trelease was able to tell him that Miss Luttrell had heard from the American consul, and that the telegram had been forwarded to a place where the expedition would be likely to send for stores.

"And my letter?" said Mr. Denning.

That, Trelease said, would no doubt reach him in the long run, but if he was far in the interior, it might be weeks first.

Mr. Denning appeared disturbed. "Weeks? Did you say weeks? I may be under the sod by that time." He rose and walked feebly across the room once or twice. Trelease went up silently and offered his arm. The old man took it and pressed it, saying, "Dear fellow! How good you are to me. How good everybody is!"

"There is not a creature in Harmonia who would not do all he knew to save you from trouble," said Trelease.

"I believe you. But—you know what the wise men of old have said. 'Black care sits behind.' 'The heart

knoweth its own bitterness.' So they found it in the springtime of the world: so we find it to-day." And he continued his walk in silence.

When he was seated he said, "Dr. Bontecoe tells me to put my house in order."

"It is what we should all do," remarked Trelease.

"I made my will long ago. What little I have goes to a distant relative, and my books and small belongings to Garlick. But—" There was a pause. Mr. Denning leaned his head on his hand, and appeared to be collecting his thoughts. Trelease to avoid the appearance of hurrying him, began to prepare a stimulant he had been ordered to take at this hour, and placed it by him. Mr. Denning drank it and his lips moved in prayer. Then he said:—

"I have been thinking very seriously of a conversation we had a few days ago. Do you remember it?"

"If you will mention the topic I dare say I shall," said Trelease.

"You were telling me of a story in which a person bore the guilt of another, and did not speak when a word would have exonerated him."

"I remember," said Trelease.

"And you expressed an opinion that in no case would it be right for the innocent to assume the guilt of the guilty one?"

Trelease assented. "He might do it possibly from a sense of duty, but in my view, it would be a mistake."

"And you said too, that such a person's influence for good would be *nil*."

"Undoubtedly."

"Trelease, look at me. Do you consider me in my right mind?"

"Yes, sir, I do," answered Trelease.

"Now tell me, do you consider yourself bound by your ordination vows? Do you consider yourself priest or layman?"

"I have always considered myself bound, and always shall. That was my great trouble when first I knew you. I felt bound, and my bonds were hateful to me."

"But not now?"

"Not now. I feel my own unworthiness—never more than at this moment—but you have made me feel that there is joy in my calling. I do not wish to be free now."

Mr. Denning was again silent. Then he asked Trelease to place on the table a tin box he pointed out lying in a corner. Trelease obeyed. Mr. Denning unlocked it, and took from it some papers and letters.

"Trelease," he said, selecting one of the letters and keeping his hand upon it, "what would you say if I told you that for nearly a quarter of a century I have lain under a false accusation of theft?"

Trelease looked at him in alarm. "It could not be, I should say, sir. Nobody would be such a fool as to believe that. I should as soon think my own father was a thief."

Mr. Denning sighed.

"Don't you think you have tired yourself too much?" said Trelease. "Had you not better rest?"

"You think I am off my head, I know. I wish I were. I wish I were!—What I have told you is true, nevertheless. I have under my hand that which proves that the guilty one was—not I."

Trelease knelt down and bowed his face. "If it be possible—" he muttered. "But no. It cannot be. It cannot be."

"It is. Do I not tell you that I have the proof?"

Trelease rose. One looking at his face would have said that it was he, not Mr. Denning, who had been accused of theft.

"If it be really so, let me entreat you not to live under that false accusation a day longer. Remember your high calling. Remember that we should set no stumbling blocks in the way of Christ's little ones; neither should we act so as to be an occasion of mirth to the ungodly.—But—forgive me—what am I that I should tell you your duty?"

"I had carried this burden to the grave but for that thought to which you have now given utterance. That is the doubt which has so oppressed me. Had I—being a priest of the Church of England—a right to leave my name besmirched?"

"No, no," Trelease exclaimed. "Under no conceivable circumstances could it be right."

"Do not say that till you know the particulars." He sat up in his chair and spoke almost in a whisper. "My people had subscribed eighty pounds to build a new schoolroom. I was about to deposit it in the bank—when—it disappeared. I had the police in. I did suspect one person in my household, wrongly as it came

out afterwards. He was a groom who had been behaving badly, and to whom I had given notice. I knew that he had got into debt, in particular to the landlord of a public-house where there was a skittle-alley. I did not tell him that I suspected him, of course; and in common fairness I made the police search everywhere; my study, my wife's room, were searched as thoroughly as were the servants' rooms. But the man was furious because his room and his boxes were searched, and he came to me—I believe he had been drinking—bidding me look near by if I would find the thief. I must confess that I suspected him the more for that. But there was not the slightest proof. He went away—to America, I believe—and shortly after he was gone it came out that I was suspected of stealing the money, and accused besides of endeavouring to put it off upon him. As I knew that I had not breathed my suspicion of him to any one, this made me angry. I was deeply hurt that I should be accused of the theft; I who spent so large a part of my income in helping the poor. It was my duty, I know; but still, I had done it. There was a great deal of talk; angry talk on this side and the other, for I had my friends as well as my detractors. The bishop heard of the matter and wrote to me, begging me to have it cleared up. He, good man, did not suspect me: not then, at any rate. My brother clergymen were all strenuous in their advice that I should use vigorous measures, and I do not think I myself wanted any urging in the matter, for I was full of indignation. I was about to apply for the services of a couple of

London detectives, when my wife stopped me. Stopped me as I was going to post my letter to Scotland Yard.

"It had been a great worry to her, having the police in and out of the house so much. I did not find it pleasant myself: but she took the suspicion so much to heart that she became actually ill. She said that if I had London detectives in the house it would be the death of her. I remember her very words: 'First they suspected the groom, now they suspect you, and the next thing they will be suspecting me. You might as well stab me at once.' She was a small, fragile thing; she looked as if a breath might blow her away, and I knew that nearly all her family had died of heart disease, and that she too might be carried off in the same way. What could I do? Her distress because I was suspected was pitiable to witness, and it was only equalled by her nervous horror at the idea of the detectives coming down from London. I was on the horns of a dilemma." He paused for a moment. Then he said: "What should you have done in such circumstances?"

"I should have sent for the London detectives," Trelease replied promptly.

"Then you are made of sterner stuff than I. Consider: she was as the very apple of my eye. How could I act so that her death might lie at my door?"

"I think I should have taken the chance of that."

"You think so? Ah, you are young yet; you have never known what it is to love. At your age I only loved books."

Trelease blushed and was silent. He thought he did know. He had found out weeks ago that he loved Kate Haverstock. While Mr. Denning was speaking, he had imagined to himself Kate as his wife, and what would be her behaviour should fortune place him in such trying circumstances. He had never dared go so far before in his imaginings, and he felt himself to be audacious now, seeing that he had spoken no word of love to her. But he felt sure of this: that Kate, instead of falling a prey to nervous attacks at the proposal of employing London detectives, would be ready to turn detective herself to clear the reputation of the man she loved.

Mr. Denning continued:—"I would have cut off my right hand rather than cause her to shed a tear. She was such a little, soft, defenceless thing; so childlike, with such winning ways. People thought that I, being middle-aged, should have married a sensible middle-aged woman. People looked on her—at first—as a kind of doll. But she made a very good parson's wife, after all, and the poor were very fond of her, and she of them."

"Where was I?— She begged me not to have detectives from London. I represented to her that I should lay myself open to misconception by failing to do so, for I had told my churchwardens that that was the course I was about to take, and I had told the same to those of my brother clergymen with whom I was on terms of intimacy. It was difficult to make those persons understand that my wife's health was the sole reason for my hushing up the matter: as difficult as it

was for me to make her understand that the matter should be probed to the bottom, rather than hushed up.

“ Her argument was that, if I replaced the money, no one could be so unjust as to think I had stolen it. I should have replaced the money in any case, you understand. It had been entrusted to me, and I was responsible.

“ But—as I said—I am not made of stern stuff. I could not withstand such entreaties. And—I never could bear to see a woman cry: not even a drunken Irishwoman.

“ I soon found—or rather she did—that hushing up the matter was the worst thing that could have been done. It was worst in every possible way. It was worst for her, and the agonies of self-reproach that she suffered helped to shorten her life. And when one of my own churchwardens told me to my face that all the parish believed me to be the thief, I felt that the only course which lay open to me was to resign the living.

“ It was best so. It seemed to me that if my unceasing charity, if my devotion to my parish work, if the life which I had lived before them all, could not convince them that I was innocent, then I had better go. But she thought that change of scene would make us happy again; that in time we should forget our troubles. I took her abroad. We went here and there and saw a great deal that was interesting and beautiful, and she was always eager that I should enjoy myself. But I did not enjoy myself. I had had my

parish so long that out of it I felt like a tree uprooted. I don't mean to say that I had never gone away for a holiday. I did that every year. But my holidays were always made to supply fresh material for parish work. If I went to Egypt, I made my trip useful to my people. What I had seen helped me to bring Moses and his time more vividly before them. And when I had seen Palestine I could tell them better what sort of lives the Master and His disciples had led. With no more such work in view, I was miserable.

"She died at Rome. When the time came that I could think of anything, I thought I would go back and set all Scotland Yard to work, if need be. Nothing could worry her now, and it seemed to me that, this matter of the robbery once made clear, I might yet find some work to do, though not in my old parish.

"I had letters and papers to sort and to destroy. I had done all that, and then there was her desk to look into. I disliked looking into it, because she had always kept it locked, and it seemed like impertinent curiosity for me to be opening it. But I did open it, and at first found nothing but my own letters, written at various times to her. And then—I found—this.

"Do you see? It is addressed to the Bishop of ——. It was open, and I read it.

"Then I knew that I must be a wanderer to the end of my days. No more preaching, no more parish work for me."

His voice sank to a whisper. "It was she who had taken that money. She owed a bill to a London

milliner; the woman was pressing her and she was afraid to come to me."

Trelease turned away. He was fearful lest it should be read in his face too plainly how he felt towards the woman who had wrecked this good man's life.

"I do not understand to this day," continued Mr. Denning, "how she could have spent so much; or how, as it was spent, she should have hesitated to come to me. Poor thing! I think she could not have known very well what she was about. I found the letter of the milliner, threatening to take proceedings if the money were not promptly paid. That doubtless frightened her, for she was such a timid, nervous creature; and then—how much she must have suffered after she had taken it. I do not wonder that she died. The wonder to me then was, that she had lived as long as she did. I have borne a good deal, but it seems to me that I could never have borne what she bore. If I had stolen to-day, it seems to me I must have confessed to-morrow.

"And now, Trelease, you know why I never would take any part in the Church services."

"I cannot quite see why you did not send that letter to the bishop," said Trelease, after a pause.

"Why should I? If it made me unhappy to think that perhaps he suspected me, would it not have made me unhappier to know that he knew my wife to be the thief? It seemed so to me then; and even now I feel that I would rather be blamed unjustly than have her blamed justly. Besides—nothing could bring her back. Nothing could bring back circumstances to what they were before that occurred. Ah! What a terrible thing

it is to think that God Himself cannot undo the past ! What is done is done to all eternity.

"But I have thought lately that after I am gone I should like the bishop to know. He is getting to be an old man now. We used to be very friendly at one time, being interested in the same things ; but that was long before he was made a bishop. I have thought I should like him to know the truth of the matter, and then again I have thought it was not worth while. She wrote that letter, and the question is, Am I bound to carry out her intention, or am I not ?"

"I should say that you were," said Trelease, "if the intention was a right one. But apart from that, did it never occur to you that you owed it to the Church of which you are minister to clear up an accusation which was so unjust as regards yourself ?"

"It has occurred to me ; but then again it seemed merely the promptings of egotism. What am I, that my character should be cleared at her expense ?"

"You are a priest of the Church of England. Is not that reason enough ?" said Trelease.

For some time Mr. Denning did not answer. At last he said :—"Perhaps it is. Here then is this letter. You can tell Garlick what I have told you, and send it to the bishop when I am gone. I should have liked to see Garlick again."

"Please God, you will see him again," said Trelease striving to speak cheerily.

"Perhaps ; perhaps," said Mr. Denning.

CHAPTER IV.

KATE THINKS ABOUT IT.

AFTER leaving Mr. Denning, Trelease walked far into the forest. It was sunset when he retraced his steps; and as he went by the Haverstocks' place he bethought himself of going in to inquire for Mrs. Haverstock. As he crossed the fence which bounded the Colonel's property he saw with surprise Kate Haverstock seated on a fallen tree weeping quietly.

Trelease in his parish rounds had seen women cry before now; but he had considered it part of his day's work to bear the sight without flinching, and he had taught himself to bear it, just as a dentist teaches himself to bear the screams of his patients.

But when he saw Kate crying he felt as if he had never seen a woman cry before. Had he taken time to think twice, he would have gone back silently by the way he came, without intruding on her grief. But instead of following this prudent course, he hastened forward, exclaiming, "Kate, dearest Kate, what is the matter?" The words were said before he could stop himself.

Kate started. "I — did not know — I thought you were miles away from here," she said, wiping her eyes hastily and blushing.

— Perhaps his face was the redder of the two. "I hope I did not startle you very much," he said.

"Indeed, you startled me considerably," said she. "And I think you ought to beg my pardon."

"I do that most humbly," said he.

There was a twinkle of fun in Kate's eyes in spite of her wet eyelashes. She put on her hat which was lying on the ground beside her, and said, turning her head slightly away:—"I suppose I must forgive you this time; but don't do it again. I dare say I am an insignificant creature, but still—"

"Oh no: anything but insignificant," said Trelease.

"But still, I don't like any but very old gentlemen to call me 'Kate'; and just at present I should call you rather—young."

"Pray forgive me," Trelease blurted out. "Your name escaped me unawares. I—I think of you as Kate—"

"That strikes me as rather impertinent."

"I—I couldn't think of you as Miss Haverstock."

"Why not?"

"Because I love you."

Kate was silent. Trelease went on. "I never intended to tell you. Upon my honour, I never intended to breathe a syllable."

"Why not?" said Kate again.

"Oh, Miss Haverstock, I am a poor man," said Trelease with a sigh. "My income is a mere pittance

How could I dare ask any gently nurtured woman to share it with me? It would be the height of selfishness in me to expect such a thing. No." Then he sighed again, and looked very sad. "No; I must continue to love you at a distance. Nothing but the sight of your distress could have made me forget myself as I did just now. Will you forgive me?" he said, timidly putting out his hand.

Kate touched it with hers. "I'll forgive you," she said; but she spoke the words with hesitation.

"If you—in token of your forgiveness—would let me share your trouble! Is Mrs. Haverstock worse again?" said he.

"Oh no," said Kate, "she gets better every day. It is — it is that she is so altered!"

And Kate sat down and began to cry again. "She is so unlike herself that we hardly know her."

Trelease sat down beside her in great concern. "Dear Miss Haverstock! Dearest Kate! Let me say it just this once. Pray do not be so distressed. You must expect a slow convalescence in a person of Mrs. Haverstock's age."

"It is not that," said Kate. "When I say she is unlike herself, I mean that she is so gentle, so grateful for everything that is done for her: and so affectionate to poor Papa. And oh, how much nicer it would have been if she had always been like that! Because, you must know, she had always been very stern—and—uncompromising. I don't wish to blame her," Kate continued, sighing. "Perhaps she thought sternness was good for us, and of course she was fond of us all at

bottom, though she never showed it. It would be dreadful if she were to die, now that she seems to be so fond of us all." Kate turned away her head but Trelease saw a tear trickle down her face.

"I don't know why I said all this," she said presently. "But I know that whatever I say is safe with a clergyman."

"May I say that your confidence is very precious to me?" said Trelease.

"I don't generally break down in this ridiculous manner," said Kate, "but I think my nerves must be giving way."

"You have had so much anxiety," said Trelease.

"I suppose it is that, and the sitting up at night. My father is not very strong, and Florence is a poor weakly creature; so I am bound to save them as much fatigue as possible. But now I feel so tired! It seems to me sometimes as if I never should get rested again."

"It is useless my saying that I wish I could help you in any way; but I do wish it," said Trelease.

"The wish is kind, and I thank you for it," said Kate. She rose presently saying she had been away long enough, and her father would be wanting her. Trelease did not feel certain whether he ought to say good-bye, or accompany her to the house. She walked on and he followed her while he was debating what he ought to do; they reached the broad path which led directly to the house, and they were within sight of it before he had come to any decision. Kate herself had not expected him to come to the house, unless indeed he had something more definite to say. As he did not go away she

began to suppose that he wished to say it, and when she found that he was following her in silence, she was vexed for a minute and then amused. She made room for him to walk beside her when the path widened a little, and said:—"I suppose you know that you will have to change your quarters soon." Trelease said he knew it. "And where," said Kate, "are you going?" Trelease said he did not know. He had thought of building himself a shanty. Kate laughed.

"A lodge in a vast wilderness! And will you have dinners sent you from the hotel?"

"I think not."

"I should say you would be very uncomfortable."

"I dare say I shall," said Trelease.

By this time they were near enough to the house to see the Colonel lying on a sofa in the verandah. He rose and came to meet them, giving Trelease a warm welcome. Kate went up stairs and her sister came down, and presently called the gentlemen to the tea-table. Trelease, who had been seldom to the house because of Mrs. Haverstock's want of cordiality, found himself treated in the most friendly way in her absence, and remained as late as he dared, hoping to see Kate again. But she did not come down, and he was at last forced to say good-night. The Colonel accompanied him to the gate, and had a little talk with him before he came back. When Trelease was gone Mrs. Bontecoe went up stairs to her sister. Kate was sitting in the dark outside her mother's room. Mrs. Haverstock had seemed disturbed by the light and she had taken it away.

"Papa would like to speak to you when you go down stairs," said Mrs. Bontecoe sitting down beside her. "And Mr. Trelease begged me particularly to say good-night to you. I thought he never would have done shaking hands to-night."

"What a ridiculous creature!" said Kate.

"Well, I think he is a good creature," said Mrs. Bontecoe.

"Oh, quite so."

"I know Rupert likes him very much indeed. And Rupert does not like everybody."

"Then that is quite conclusive," laughed Kate, as she went down stairs.

The Colonel was walking up and down in the verandah, but he entered the dining-room as Kate entered it.

"My dear," he said when he had given Kate a cup of tea. "I am uneasy."

"You need not be, dad," Kate replied. "Mamma is sleeping very comfortably to-night."

"I am rejoiced at that," said the Colonel. "But I was thinking of something else," and he began to pull his moustache and pucker up his face as he did when perplexed. "I fear that I am too impulsive," he said at last.

"Dear dad," said Kate, patting his hand. "So am I. Perhaps we were born so."

"I have done what I fear you will not like, Kate."

"Now what can that be, dad? Out with it."

"Well, my dear, as I said, it was impulse. Trelease,

who appears to be a very well-meaning, as well as modest young man—”

“Quite so,” said Kate.

“Not to say shy,” continued the Colonel.

“Oh, very, very much so,” said Kate.

“Well, dear, I gathered from what he said, that he will be in some difficulty when he leaves Bontecoe, as to a shelter of any sort other than the hotel. There is a boarding-house, you know, but he seems to shrink from the idea of the boarding-house—”

“Any decently brought up person would shrink from the idea of the boarding-house,” cried Kate. “He wouldn’t have a room to himself, I dare say. And the food!—They give you rusty bacon and soda biscuits and coffee boiled to death at every meal, and on Sundays there are ice-creams made with coarse brown sugar, which they call dess—ert. And the dirt! I wouldn’t wish my worst enemy to go there.”

“Well, dear, the fact is, I asked him to come here after your sister leaves us.”

“What did he say?” Kate asked after a moment’s pause.

“He said he should be delighted. I never thought till afterwards that you might not like it.”

“Shall you mind it, dad?”

“I? I thought it would be rather pleasant than otherwise.”

“Then, if you don’t mind it, I won’t,” said Kate.

The puckers in the Colonel’s face disappeared.

“I am glad you won’t feel it inconvenient. To tell the truth, it seemed to me a Christian charity to ask

him. A young man of small means finds it so difficult to make himself comfortable. People talk a good deal about young men going to the bad in various ways, as if they had a natural affinity for what was bad ; but really I do not think young fellows would ever take to objectionable courses if they were comfortable and happy at home."

"Dear me!" said Kate, "you don't think Mr. Trelease looks as if he were going to the bad, do you? If you do, you'd better not have him here. We are such a saintly household, and he might corrupt us."

The Colonel laughed and pulled her ear. "I was just airing my pet theory, and you know it. I think Mr. Trelease a very good young man."

"I hope he is not too good for this work-a-day world," said Kate, "because if he is, I shall hate him."

Going by and by into Mrs. Bontecoe's room, Kate found her at work on her husband's clothes. She looked up smiling as Kate entered, and began speaking of her plans. She was going to hire a woman to clean Rupert's house, and she would stand by and see with her own eyes that his room was scrubbed. Then there would be whitewashing and kalsomining to do, and after that she supposed her worries would be over.

"My worries are not over," said Kate. "In fact, they are only just begun."

"What do you mean?" said Mrs. Bontecoe, as she held up to view a buttonless shirt of her husband's.

Kate was silent for a moment. "Flo, what constitutes an engagement?" she said at last.

"What does the child mean?" said Mrs. Bontecoe,

leaving her needle sticking in a button, and staring at Kate.

"I want to know what constitutes an engagement."

"Why, an engagement is an agreement to marry some one at some time or other."

"An agreement to marry? So it is. Then you must agree to marry, or else you are not engaged!"

"Of course."

"Then I'm not engaged, I'm glad to say. I was afraid I might be without knowing it."

"Who have you been flirting with?" said Mrs. Bontecoe, with an air of matronly severity. "Not that wretched little curate, I hope."

"I have not been flirting, and he is not wretched," Kate replied. "I feel rather sorry for the poor fellow. He blurted it all out unawares."

"Blurted out—what?"

"You stupid thing! That he was fond of me. That I was his dearest Kate, and I mustn't be angry, and he couldn't help it. And that he was dreadfully poor."

"And that was all?" inquired Mrs. Bontecoe.

"I think it was a good deal."

"And not a word about your marrying him?"

"He said he was too poor to marry."

"Then," said Mrs. Bontecoe with great emphasis, "if he was too poor to marry, he had no business to be making love to you."

"Do you call that making love?" said Kate. "He didn't look a bit like a lover. He was quite woebegone, and he hardly looked at me. And when he asked me

to shake hands in token of my forgiveness, I noticed that his cuff was all frayed at the edges; and I don't think it had a button on it, either."

"Well, for a shy young man, as people suppose him to be, he has a fair amount of cheek. Don't you ever speak to him again, Kate, if you can help it."

"As papa has asked him to come and stay here when you go, I shall not be able to help speaking to him."

Mrs. Bontecoe looked displeased. "I do not like that arrangement at all. I wish papa had thought of speaking to me first."

"It's papa's own house. I suppose he can invite whom he likes."

"I was only thinking of your welfare, Kate."

"As if I couldn't take care of myself!" cried Kate.

"I am nearly as old as you were when you married."

"There is one thing perfectly clear, Kate; if a man is really too poor to marry he should hold his tongue. I am sure Rupert would agree with me."

"I suppose you will be telling Rupert of this, the first chance you get?" cried Kate.

"My dear child, what if I do!" Mrs. Bontecoe replied. "Don't you know that a married woman tells her husband everything?"

"Then I shall take care what I say to you in future."

Mrs. Bontecoe smiled, and said that Kate would know all about it when she got married herself.

"Then I never will marry," cried Kate hotly.

"Never, if marriage is to make me a treacherous revealer of sacred confidences!"

It had seemed to Trelease at the moment an extraordinary piece of good luck that the father of his lady-love should offer him house room, and he had accepted the proffered kindness with alacrity. But scarcely was he out of sight of the house than he became the prey of second thoughts. It seemed then that he could not with propriety become the Colonel's guest unless he told the Colonel what he had told Kate. And he felt nevertheless that it was not an easy matter to go to a man and say, "My dear sir, I love your daughter, and I am too poor to marry. Under these circumstances, ought I to become an inmate of your house?" The Colonel would probably reply that he must continue to worship the young lady at a distance, and the greater the distance the better.

Coming back one day from visiting the sick he struck into a path, which brought him into the high road near the Haverstocks' tea plantation. As he came near he saw the Colonel walking pensively up and down between the rows of stunted, dried-up tea plants. As he greeted Trelease he shook his head and pointed to them.

"Barely two inches of growth," he said; "and the Major assured me that twelve inches was the normal amount in a fair season. It is very disappointing; very."

Trelease, whose faith in the Major had been greatly on the wane for some time past, hinted, that it was possible the climate was not favourable to the tea plant.

"Oh, it must be favourable," said the Colonel; "the

Commissioner of Agriculture said the very same thing as the Major did as to the average growth *per annum*."

Trelease forebore to hint that possibly the Commissioner of Agriculture was hired to stay at home and lie for the good of his country. But, feeling very sorry that the good Colonel should have been so completely deceived, and should be so ready even now to pin his faith on a Commissioner of Agriculture, Trelease, when he came to the telling of his errand, in his desire to be so upright that the Colonel should not be taken in, laid greater stress than perhaps he might else have done on his own poverty.

"And it was that which made me think that—that perhaps Miss Haverstock—that in short it was out of the question, and—it would probably alter your ideas as to allowing me to be an inmate of your house."

The Colonel let him say his say in silence. When the young man spoke of his love for Kate, a pang had gone through his heart. He had always supposed that Kate would want to marry some day; but how far off that day had seemed! It was as it were but yesterday that she was a child in a white frock sitting on his knee.

Trelease took his silence for displeasure. "I own to having been presumptuous," he said. "These things steal upon one unawares. I had never intended to speak of the attachment, but—"

"The question is, what does Kate say?" said the Colonel.

"I don't know," said Trelease. And then he added diffidently, "I don't think she actually dislikes me."

The Colonel smiled slightly. "If she did, it would not be like Kate if she did not let you see it."

Trelease took this for encouragement.

"Then—you do not think my being so very poor is an insurmountable barrier?"

"Are you afraid of being poor?" said the Colonel.

"I? Oh, no, I have never minded it," said Trelease. "For myself alone I could be contented with very little. But when one thinks of a wife, there is such a difference!"

"Naturally, things alter their proportions."

"Well, Colonel, all I possess is a couple of hundred a year."

The Colonel wished the sum had been greater; at the same time he was quite sure that happiness has hardly anything to do with riches. He and his Cordelia had begun life with nearly ten times that sum and yet they had not been happy together.

"I could give Kate a little—it would be very little—when she married," he said. "And there would be something more to come to her at my death."

"I don't wish to contemplate—even for a moment—the money I am to get with Miss Haverstock, if she honours me enough to listen to me," said Trelease.

"But my dear fellow," said the Colonel, "you will want your bread and butter, and so will Kate. But you will have to find out whether Kate will have anything to say to you first."

Trelease, taking this for consent, wrung the Colonel's hand, and professed himself deeply grateful. But the Colonel bade him reserve his thanks. "There is no

saying what Kate will think about this," he said. "Old married man that I am, and blest with two affectionate daughters, I feel nevertheless that it is impossible for a man ever to predict what a woman will do next."

As soon as Mrs. Bontecoe had gone to her husband, Trelease came to stay with the Haverstocks, and before long Kate began to ask herself whether she liked him or not, and she could not make up her mind about it.

One day at dinner, Kate, more from exuberance of spirit than from spite, began to criticise her neighbours' doings with a plain-spokenness which would have made those neighbours' ears tingle had they heard but the echo of it. Mrs. Bontecoe, who had come out to see her mother, joined in with equal zest. The Colonel, after a gentle deprecatory word, had held his peace; but Trelease, who had sat in uneasy silence from the beginning, at last exclaimed to Kate:—

"Miss Haverstock, you are wanting in Christian charity!"

It was as if a bomb had exploded on the dinner table. Mrs. Bontecoe drew herself up and looked daggers at Trelease; Kate blushed scarlet and sat in astonished silence till dinner was over. Trelease looked, the instant after he had spoken, as though he had been the rebuked instead of the rebuker. When the sisters were alone together, Mrs. Bontecoe was unsparing in her denunciation of the curate's impertinence.

"If you marry that man, he will be like a grand inquisitor to you, and you won't dare say your soul is your own."

"The man isn't born who could come the grand inquisitor over me," said Kate.

"And to think," said Mrs. Bontecoe, "that but for papa's kindness he must have gone to that horrid boarding-house, because he is too beggarly to afford the hotel prices! I wonder respect for papa, if not common gratitude, did not keep him silent."

"Papa has said the same thing before now, Florence, when you and I have been sharpening our wits at other people's expense."

"Papa has a right to say what he likes to his own daughters. I will not dine here as long as he has this wretched little curate in the house. If I were in your place I would never speak to him again. If you sent him to Coventry, he would be obliged to take himself off, obtuse as he is. Take my advice, Kate, while you have time."

"I'll think about it," said Kate.

And she did think about it. She felt angry with Trelease for his rebuking her, and yet there was something that pleased her in the audacity of the rebuke. There had been neither vacillation nor weakness in the manner of its administration. And it was so true! Kate knew well enough St. Paul's definition of Christian charity. She was sure that Trelease had acted from a sense of duty in administering the rebuke. It had made her feel a little afraid of him, but she could not therefore dislike him, as her sister did.

She decided that she would not send him to Coventry, as her sister advised. She would behave just as though he had said nothing. Florence was so

angry with the poor man only because her conscience told her that she was included in the rebuke.

No, she would not send him to Coventry. Yet, with something of the feeling that makes a child hide away after it has been scolded, Kate stayed up stairs with her mother for the rest of the day, and did not even go down stairs to pour out her father's tea.

When tea was brought in, with a message from Kate that hers was to be sent up stairs on Mrs. Havestock's tray, Trelease felt that she was offended beyond measure.

When Kate did not even come to prayers, Trelease felt that her absence was equivalent to dismissal, and gloomily packed his trunks before he went to bed.

He was not even sure whether he ought to eat another meal at the Colonel's table, if his presence there was to keep the young lady of the house away from her proper place. He got up very early, so as to intercept a chance waggon going into Harmonia. He would send his trunks to the boarding-house and get what accommodation there was to be had there, and be thankful; for how many a better man had been worse housed!

Upon this forlorn and downcast man there shone presently the vision of a charming young lady, with something pink and cloudlike about her, who passed him with a pretty look of surprise, and an arch nod of greeting.

Trelease answered her nod by lifting his hat. Then he turned away his head and sighed. She was always charming, and now she was more charming than ever.

He began to walk slowly up and down the verandah, wishing, yet dreading, that some conveyance would come in sight. Perhaps Kate would allow him to shake hands with her and express his sorrow at having offended her, when she found that he was really going.

Kate, who had thought it likely that he would wish to say a word in deprecation of her displeasure, had risen thus early to give him an opportunity of saying it before the Colonel should be about. As the Colonel himself was a very early riser, it was necessary for her to get up while the stars were still glimmering. While she was dressing she heard the door of the curate's room open, and stealthy steps descend the stairs. Creeping out on her balcony she presently heard him in the verandah below, turning over the leaves of a book, and once or twice he sighed. Kate crept back again, perfectly satisfied. She put the finishing touches to her toilette, and then took a last look in the glass.

"If I'm not prettier than Dolly Varden, I'm a Dutchman," was her impartial verdict. Then, as soon as she heard sounds in the cookhouse and could tell by the smoke that the fire was well under way, she descended on a reconnoitring expedition as we have seen.

She re-entered the house as she had left it, by the side door. Just by the front door, as she was going out on the verandah, she observed a portmanteau marked *Trelease*. She took in the situation at a glance.

"He thinks I am mortally offended, and he is going away. H—m, we'll see about that." In half a minute she was standing by *Trelease* with a smile. The sun

was just appearing over the ridge of hills which bounded the eastern horizon.

"How very early you are this morning!" she began, to give him an opening.

He was too stupid to avail himself of it at once. He thought she was showing him that she did not bear malice. And though he felt how doubly hard it was to go away just now, yet he did not dream but that he must go.

"I believe I am a little earlier than usual," he said, looking at his watch.

"Ever so much earlier," she insisted. "I'm sorry, because you will have to wait so much longer for breakfast."

Trelease began to explain that it did not signify his having to wait for breakfast. In fact, he wished to get into Harmonia as early as possible.

"Wait till after breakfast, and then I dare say papa will drive you in the buggy," said Kate.

Trelease said he thought he would walk, and he intended to go almost immediately, and so forth.

"Shall you be back in time for dinner? Because I'll order it later if it would be more convenient to you," said Kate, who was enjoying his embarrassment.

"Oh no, no; on no account," cried he. "I—in fact—I felt that after what happened yesterday I had better—in short—you would expect me to go."

"What happened yesterday?" said Kate slowly, as she seated herself. "I don't remember, except that the pudding was burnt. But I do assure you I am not answerable for that. It was the cook's fault."

Trelease reddened. "You mean that you do not

bear malice because I was presumptuous enough to rebuke you."

"Oh, that!—" said Kate, putting her hands into her apron pockets, and spreading them out on her lap. "So you are going because of that. May I ask why?"

"It has been my misfortune to offend you——"

"Who told you I was offended?"

"I thought you were. Your sister was. I could see that."

"That is her affair. Did she tell you I was offended?"

"Oh no, she would not speak to me."

"I wouldn't take things so much for granted, if I were you," said Kate, as she contemplated her slippers.

Trelease, who all this while had been leaning against one of the posts of the verandah, came and stood in front of her. "Is it possible that you are not offended?"

"Did you mean to offend me?" said Kate, still looking down.

"How could I? I never thought about it—till afterwards."

"I suppose you thought that—as a clergyman—you had a right to say what you said."

"I did not think—not in the way you put it. That is, I did not think of it as a right, but as a duty. And, I felt compunction afterwards that I had done it! Yet were it to do again, I hope I should do it. Heaven forbid that I should fail in my duty, even though the doing of it were like the cutting off my right hand."

Kate, still contemplating her slippers, was aware that the poor curate was trembling as he stood in front of her, as if he were the culprit. She stretched out her hand and pulled a chair towards her. "Sit down

and take it easy," she said. Trelease sat down mechanically.

"I hope you see my position," he said.

Kate looked up at the sky and reflected for a minute "I suppose," she said, "that what you said to me, you would have said to one of your parishioners had you had the occasion to do so."

"Undoubtedly. Only that I should have felt no compunction afterwards. It is because you are a young lady, and young ladies are not accustomed to be told plain truths, more's the pity. And so naturally they feel offended."

"You will have it that I was offended," said Kate looking up with a smile; though indeed she was touched by the curate's humility, and tears were not very far off.

"It would hardly be in human nature not to be offended. And yet I was right, and you were wrong; very, very wrong."

"I know I was," said Kate. "But really I didn't mean any harm. It was all in fun, you know. If any of those people were ill, I'd sit up and nurse them. I can't help seeing people's absurdities. And yet, I'd do anything for anybody. I wouldn't mind what."

Trelease thrust his hands in his pockets and appeared lost in thought. Kate began to think it rather hard that he should not seize upon the olive branch she held out, and end the discussion at once, instead of prolonging it. She rose from her chair and turned towards the dining-room door, when he said in a low voice:—

"Though I give my body to be burned and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."

"Oh," Kate cried, "that is too bad! you are determined to crush me."

She went into the dining-room and began to arrange the breakfast table. She did feel crushed for a moment, and had she been safe in her room she would have sat down and cried. She had ground the coffee and finished laying the cloth when Trelease came in. He held out his hand and said lugubriously:—"I will say good-bye. I had better go."

"Well, if you must—" then Kate looking shyly up at him, saw he looked very sad. "Oh," she cried, leaving her hand in his, "don't go!"

"Can I stay without offending you?" he said, holding her hand.

She pulled it away and tried to laugh. "You will have it I am offended. How tiresome you are!"

"Why did you not come to look at the sunset last night?"

"Because I thought the up stairs view was prettier."

"Was that all? How I tormented myself!" he sighed.

Kate laughed merrily.

"Then—I may stay?"

"Haven't I been begging and praying you to stay! Look here—I like brave people. And I think you are brave."

"If you could but love me a little, Kate!"—

"That would require thinking about," said Kate as she left the room.

CHAPTER V.

BISHOP THRASHER.

WHEN the cool autumn weather came, and the last patient was dismissed convalescent from the hospital, Sylvia went back to her own house and sat down to count the cost. She found that it amounted to more than she had expected. She would not be able to go to Europe next year. Of course she might go economically, but she didn't want to go economically. She had intended to ask Mr. Denning to go as her guest, and get him to act as her guide in a tour to see all the English cathedrals. She was a little sorry at having to give up the idea; though, after all, perhaps Mr. Denning would not have been safe to travel with since this illness, even had he liked to go. Dr. Bontecoe considered him shaky and liable to go off at any time. Next to Mr. Denning she would have liked Mr. Garlick as a guide, and it was unfortunate that Mr. Garlick was not old enough yet to act as grandfather to a travelling party. It was odd no one had any news of Mr. Garlick yet. Sylvia had been asked several times where he was; as if

she were more likely to know of his whereabouts than any one else. She had answered at first lightly, that he might have caught the fever of the country, or that he might have been swallowed by an anaconda. But when after some delay the American consul had written to say that Sylvia's telegram should be forwarded, and still there was no news of Mr. Garlick or his party, then Sylvia began to feel a strange compunction at the bottom of her heart, in spite of all the common sense which forbade her wasting her nervous energy in regretting what could not be helped. Sightseeing in Europe would, as she knew, be the best way to stifle this unreasonable compunction, but she could not expect to spend her money and have it too.

"There will be no Europe for you and me, this year," she said to Miss Priest, as she shut up her account book.

"I believe you have spent more on this business than you need," said Miss Priest when she had looked over some of the items.

"One always does spend a little more than one intends. Well, the money's gone, and if it has done good I shall not mind its going."

"If!—" Miss Priest ejaculated. "How many of 'em would have died but for you! If, indeed!"

"I do think two or three would have died. Do you know, I do not feel as if I had done with them even yet," said Sylvia presently. "They don't seem to get on as they ought, now that we have cool weather. I shall have to set up a convalescent hospital, I think."

"Mercy me!" exclaimed Miss Priest. "You'll be

spending everything and go bare yourself at last. I'd let some one else run a convalescent hospital if I were you."

"Who but myself can do it? I see nobody here who could undertake such a thing."

"I presume you are right there. All the same, I should say you'd done enough and to spare."

"The trouble is, I don't feel as if I had done enough as long as I think I can do something more."

"I know you will do as you please, because you always do," said Miss Priest severely. "But I feel bound to tell you when I see you are going to waste your money."

"That is of course," said Sylvia. "Come now, don't be cross; I'll promise you not to do anything rash."

To turn her own house into a convalescent hospital would have been in some respects the easiest plan, but Sylvia thought that a greater change of air would be better for the convalescents. And she was conscious too, of a sense of weariness of Harmonia and all its surroundings, and a longing to change the scene.

Dr. Bontecoe when consulted, ordered her change of air immediately. Sylvia did not demur, but suggested to him that she would like to take a party of the convalescents with her. The doctor said in that case she had better stay at home.

Then they had a discussion, and at last Sylvia compounded for a small party, three or four at a time. She declared her conscience would not be easy if she went away to get a change, knowing that she left behind those who were more in need of one than she was

herself. Then the doctor said that when she went he wished his wife to go, as she too would be better for a change. Mrs. Bontecoe objected that all the house-keeping would go wrong if she left him; but he promised that he would get Kate to give him his dinner for a week or ten days, and he would come to fetch her and stay perhaps a day or two himself. "But where is it to be?" said Dr. Bontecoe.

"I know it won't be Newport or Saratoga," said Sylvia, laughing. "I couldn't take a party there because I am too poor. I must find out some quiet, unfashionable place where I shall not feel badly at having no new Worth toilets to show off."

Dr. Bontecoe suggested their crossing the street to consult Major Forepaw. There were places up in the mountains not a hundred miles off where people from Texas and Alabama went to spend the hot months. Major Forepaw would be able to recommend some one of these health resorts.

The Major who was busy paring his nails with his feet on the desk before him, jumped up and shook hands and placed chairs for Sylvia and the doctor. He was about to show Sylvia a paragraph in the personal column of a Washington paper, complimentary to herself, but she cut him short and inquired what cheap, quiet health resort he could recommend, not too far off, that she could visit with a party of friends.

Major Forepaw folded up the paper, with the *personals* outside. He had written the paragraph himself and thought he had done it very neatly. He wondered why Miss Luttrell should pretend to object to having her

good deeds taken notice of. Nothing would have made him believe that her objection was anything but pretence; so he folded the paper with that side out and a blue pencil mark scored under it, and left it on the table where it would catch her eye; while he himself pretended to be searching in a big book for a list of suitable southern watering places.

"Mustn't be too expensive? How would the White Sulphur do?"

"Too far off," Sylvia replied promptly.

"Alum Springs?"

"Is it fashionable?"

"H'm. Not very," said the Major at a venture.

"Then it will do. As long as a place is respectable, and cheap, and clean—"

"Respectable!" echoed the Major. "Why the bishop is there!"

Sylvia did not seem at all impressed. She laughed and asked what kind of bishop. Because there were Mormon bishops, and Methodist bishops, and—

"An Episcopal bishop, to be sure; the Reverend Dr. Thrasher."

"What kind of person is he?" Sylvia asked.

"He is very popular, so I'm told. The Alum Spring House was pretty nigh full before he'd been there a week. Fact."

"They might be raising their prices in consequence," Sylvia suggested.

The Major said he reckoned not. Southerners were mighty poor since the war, and proprietors knew it was no good making their tariff prohibitive. He did not

however tell Sylvia that it was he who had suggested to the proprietor the advisability of making an offer to the bishop to sojourn with his family at the Alum Spring House at half price, as a bait to draw visitors. The result had fully justified the experiment, and the proprietor who had contemplated shutting up his hotel was now advertising it as one of the latest to be kept running.

"Talk of the —" said Major Forepaw, with a pamphlet in his hand on the virtues of the Alum Spring, which he had taken out of his desk to present to Sylvia—"there *is* the bishop!"

The hotel omnibus was stopping at the rectory gate, and a tall gaunt man who had just descended from it was standing on the dusty pathway looking about him. From the omnibus, as they looked, emerged Mr. Bloss, who opened the gate with alacrity, and in dumb show welcomed his ecclesiastical superior to the rectory. Sylvia looked, and laughed within herself for looking; and Dr. Bontecoe remarked that he was quite a contrast to the parson in build.

"Mighty curious," soliloquized the Major. "There's no confirmation going on, as I know of, and I don't know what else should bring him here. I believe I'll run across and inquire."

Sylvia was delighted at the Major's *naïveté*. She took the pamphlet and went down stairs, declaring that she felt quite curious herself. The Major rushed across the street, and she got into her buggy nodding a good-bye to the doctor, and drove homeward. Before an hour had passed, not only the Major but all Harmonia knew that Dr. Thrasher was a visitor at the rectory. A cyclone,

sweeping up the Mississippi valley, had destroyed half a dozen trestle bridges and made the railway track impassable for a few days. The bishop who had been on his way from the Alum Spring to a city where he was expected to address a meeting, found himself stranded on the Junction platform, and the train he wanted to go by delayed for an indefinite number of hours. Mr. Bloss, who had been to Jonesville and back, could do no less than offer him the hospitality of the rectory, which the bishop accepted with alacrity, being of a thrifty temperament, and much averse to spending money at chance hotels where a reduction might not be willingly made.

But, if the bishop was glad to accept the rector's hospitality, the bosom of the rector's wife was by no means filled with gladness. She was in her bedroom when her husband came to tell her whom he had brought home with him, and in her despair she felt as if she could take to her bed and have an attack of something or other.

"Oh," she moaned as she rocked herself slowly. "Why didn't you tell him I was sick?"

"I told him you had been sick. But you went to church last Sunday. And you know you went up street yesterday evening."

"That's not to say I'm well enough to take trouble fixing for company. I'm sure I don't see how I'm to do it. Only to think of doing it gives me the headache."

"Send to Mrs. Macfarlane," suggested the rector.

"I don't know. She's acting very strangely. Since

I've been able to crawl around she hasn't once been near me."

"Mrs. Macgregor, then."

"La, Mr. Bloss. She would talk me to death."

"Well, here he is, and you must do the best you can for him," said Mr. Bloss. And he left the room, shutting the door not quite as gently as he should have done.

Mrs. Bloss sat down and wrote with more celerity than might have been expected, a note to Mrs. Macgregor, explaining the sudden demand on her energies, and begging for a contribution to to-morrow's dinner-table. She wrote similar notes to Mrs. Tregellas, Mrs. Macfarlane, and Mrs. Lovett. She wrote Mrs. Lovett's address with an angry scratch of her pen, for she suspected that Mr. Lovett had not contributed a cent towards her husband's salary for the last three months. And Mrs. Lovett had not sent so much as a broiler or a pat of butter for that length of time. Their stinginess was so flagrant that Mr. Bloss said they ought to be put out of the Church. She wrote a little more in detail to Mrs. Bontecoe, because she had seen Mrs. Bontecoe in a new silk dress at church, and of course the money for it must have come out of the doctor's pocket, so that he must have a private income: for she was sure no patient had thought of paying him yet, any more than she herself had. But to Sylvia she wrote at greatest length, laying much stress on the fact of her expecting a "dumb chill" the next day, and her consequent inability to entertain the bishop properly. She sent this letter by a special messenger, feeling sure that Sylvia would come forward and relieve her of the

trouble of entertaining such a white elephant as the bishop was to her. And then she set to work to do her best for this day only.

The dinner was over and the two gentlemen were seated each in a rocking chair on the porch overlooking the dusty street. Mr. Bloss had seen by the appearance of the table that his wife had put forth her best energies. He had the comfortable consciousness of having dined well, and he naturally supposed the bishop's inward satisfaction to be not less than his own. He too, had been disposed to look upon this unexpected guest as somewhat of a white elephant, though he had felt none of the despair which his wife had felt at being called upon to entertain him. However, as the white elephant was here, why not make his coming redound to the well-being of Harmonia?

He had dilated to his utmost on the unexpected good fortune which had befallen Harmonia in having a visit from the bishop, and had hinted that the Harmonia people would be glad of the opportunity to make his acquaintance. The bishop, feeling that his age placed him beyond the necessity of seeking popularity, did not receive the hint with much favour. He said he did not see what good it could do him to shake hands with a hundred and odd people whom he did not know, and should probably never see again; nor did he see what good shaking hands with him could do any one of the hundred and odd. Mr. Bloss was baffled; but returned presently to the charge.

"Perhaps the reception might tax your strength too much," he observed, with an air of tender consideration.

"But what do you say, Bishop, to giving them a little address? Everybody would be delighted, and there would be real practical good to be got from it, of course."

"H—m!" said the bishop, who was seeking furtively in his pockets for a morsel of chewing tobacco. He liked a pipe after dinner, or still better, a cigar; but, as Mr. Bloss did not appear to have the habit of smoking, he forebore to ask for tobacco. He had learnt to be "all things to all men," in so far as not to run counter to their harmless prejudices; and he was aware that certain of his clergy looked on tobacco as the accursed thing, as much the root of all evil as idleness or drunkenness. As for himself he could use tobacco in any form, and he did not refuse a nip of even home-made apple brandy, if it came fairly in his way. He could discuss canvas-back ducks and Bay oysters one day, and break his fast contentedly the next on cold corn-bread and butter-milk. He was a man who had great powers of silence, and there was always the element of unexpectedness in what he said. Indeed, as one of his lady parishioners had said of him when he was plain Parson Thrasher, he was a perfect lucky bag of unexpectedness.

Mrs. Bloss, in a flimsy American silk that strove unsuccessfully to be an imitation of one of Sylvia's last year's Worth costumes, sat opposite the bishop and rocked herself solemnly as she waved a large Japanese fan to keep off the flies. The bishop, feeling uncomfortable at the waving and the rocking which reminded him of a steamer trip he had taken when young, fixed

his eyes on the most solid thing in sight, the cross-beam of the porch overhead : and appeared to meditate.

"I know what the people would like," said Mrs. Bloss with portentous gravity. For it was not every day that she could sit in her best gown opposite a bishop.

"And what is that, Mis' Bloss?" the bishop inquired. He had found a fragment of tobacco in his pocket and was chewing in a quiet, unobtrusive manner : and he was quite content to listen to Mrs. Bloss or any other foolish woman as long as it lasted.

"Why," said Mrs. Bloss, addressing herself apparently to her husband, though she spoke in answer to the bishop's question ; "I'm sure everybody would like to hear the bishop's experience. And what an experience ! Just think now ! The bishop's been married fifty years."

"That's so," said the bishop, smiling pleasantly. "Fifty years it is. I celebrated my golden wedding," he continued, rocking himself gently, "only the other day. People were wonderfully kind ; indeed, we had quite a time."

"Oh," said Mrs. Bloss, delighted to find a topic on which she could enlarge, "I read all about it in the *United Gainesville Bruiser and Advancer*. It was an elegant notice."

"Well, yes, I suppose the papers would be making a few remarks on the circumstance. It don't occur to every man, much less to every bishop, to have been in the bonds of matrimony for half a century."

"It must almost have felt like being married over again to have such a lot of presents. I read the list of them in the *Advancer*. They must have been splendid."

"Yes, people were very kind."

"Well now, Bishop, I've wanted so much to know whether the big water pitcher and goblet that were presented by all the ladies of the diocese, was real gold or only plated ware."

The bishop said he had not asked any questions because one must not look a gift horse in the mouth. But he had taken it for granted that the things were all plated ware. What use would a plain man like himself have for vessels of gold?

"I reckon Mis' Thrasher must have set up a glass cupboard in the parlour to put all the things in?"

The bishop shook his head, and said he had not seen the things since their presentation. His wife had, no doubt, put them safely away somewhere.

Mr. Bloss thought it was time for him to strike in. "Every one knows what a helpmeet Mrs. Thrasher is. She is known far and wide, almost as well as yourself I should say, Bishop."

"I dare say, I dare say," said the bishop nodding and smiling.

"Not a bad thing I should say, Bishop, to be at the head of a diocese rich enough to bring gifts of gilt ware on such an occasion. Perhaps some bishops would not object to change dioceses with you."

"And there was a carpet. Best Brussels threeply," interjected Mrs. Bloss.

"I wouldn't mind exchanging with you myself, all other things being equal," pursued the Reverend Josiah.

"Ha!" said the bishop, with a smile as of a man whose soul soared above the allurements of gilt ware

and threeply Brussels. "Let us not despise the day of small things, Brother Bloss,—the day of small things."

"Yes, yes, yes," said the Reverend Josiah with a solemn nod to emphasize each affirmative. For it was not to be supposed that he nourished so small a passion as envy.

"Despise it or not, it is the day of small things with us," said Mrs. Bloss. "I don't doubt but Dr. Thrasher has met with every kind of a congregation in a ministry that's spread over fifty odd years. But I don't think it can ever have been his lot to be set over such a niggardly set of parishioners as we've come among;—don't you think so, Mr. Bloss?"

Mr. Bloss lifted his hand in warning to his Araminta. "Let us not obtrude these little domestic trials."

"They're domestic, as you say, but I know if Mis' Thrasher was here she would agree with me they weren't to be called little. Would you call it little, Bishop, if you didn't know whether you were going to get your salary or not, or whether you'd have a dinner fit to eat from day to day?"

The bishop shook his head and looked grave.

"Is this really so?" he asked Mr. Bloss.

"They have been backward: truth compels me to say that there has been backwardness. There seems a singular want of—hum—ha—spontaneity," said Mr. Bloss.

"They don't act up to their privileges," said Mrs. Bloss. "Now there are a good many English here. You'd think they'd be glad to have a countryman to minister to their spiritual wants. Not a bit of it. It's

my belief Mr. Bloss has met with animosity from that cause alone. And yet I know of two naturalized Germans and a Swede who are in similar positions and immensely popular."

"H—m, h—m, h—m," said the bishop.

Then he asked a question or two. Was it not a new place? Had they not had a good deal of sickness? Had there not been a great drought? and so forth. To which Mr. Bloss replied in the affirmative. Then the bishop asked whether there was any rival church at work, to which Mr. Bloss was compelled to reply in the negative. There was the coloured Baptist church at the Quarters, of course; but that did not count.

The bishop sat for a while in a brown study, and when he spoke it was to say a word in reference to the wish expressed by Mr. Bloss that he would meet the Harmonia people.

If it could be done without formality or fuss, he said, he would be glad to do it. But let it be clearly understood there was to be nothing like a reception, no hand shaking. He would just say a few words to as many as might choose to come together.

Without losing a moment, Mrs. Bloss put on her bonnet and went out to advertise the coming event *vivâ voce*, at the post-office and the hotel. If the bishop gave his address at all it must be that same evening, he said; for he did not wish to delay his journey a moment after the trains had recommenced running. So that the dwellers outside the town would have remained ignorant, had not Raine volunteered to ride round and carry Mrs. Bloss's message. He galloped

off on his errand in the highest spirits. It would give him a chance of seeing Mary Ellacombe.

Boniface foreseeing the likelihood of transient guests at supper, ordered an extra dozen of chickens to be got ready, and began to make his biggest freezer full of ice cream. Bishops were not stranded every day on the platform of Harmonia Junction, and he sent a bowlful of the ice cream—it was canned apricot—to the rectory as soon as it was set, with his compliments to Dr. Thrasher; and got the bishop's thanks and compliments in return.

When, an hour later, Sylvia herself appeared, like a beneficent whirlwind, and begged to be allowed to entertain the bishop at her own house, the bishop began to think that if there was friction in the parish, it was possible the fault might not wholly be on the parishioners' side.

CHAPTER VI.

HE SHOULD BUY IT BY THE BARREL.

MRS. BLOSS had at first supposed that the gathering at such short notice would be no more than could be accommodated at the rectory. But it seemed as though all Harmonia had determined to be there, and some one proposed an adjournment to the Hall; but Mrs. Bloss whispered to her husband that if he used the Hall for a church meeting he would be expected to pay for it; and Mr. Bloss after a hasty colloquy with the bishop, proposed an adjournment to the church, where all would find seats.

This was quickly done. The rectory lamps were carried in, lighted as they were, and placed on the pulpit and reading desk. An armchair was brought for the bishop, and one for Mr. Bloss. Major Forepaw, being churchwarden, was expected to seat himself close to the bishop; but he preferred the gloomy corner behind the western door, where he could chew without giving offence to the squeamish Britishers of which the community was so largely composed. He was sought for in his retirement by Mr. Bloss, who suggested that as

churchwarden he ought to introduce the bishop to the people.

"Shucks!" was the Major's unsympathetic reply. "I ain't acquainted with the old man. It's you who ought to do it."

Thus rebuffed, Mr. Bloss was obliged to perform the ceremony of introduction himself. To a good many people there the saying the few required words seemed a very simple thing. The Major, for one, felt that he could have done it had he chosen: Sylvia Luttrell, as she listened to Mr. Bloss clearing his throat for his speech, felt quite sure that she would have performed the introduction remarkably well, without any such futile preliminaries. This was what Mr. Bloss did contrive to say, as soon as he had disentangled his legs from the legs of his chair. It must be remembered that he had not a single book in his possession from which he might have got a "crib" for this occasion.

"Ladies and gentlemen—" then he stopped short, for it occurred to him that as he was in church perhaps he should have said "dearly beloved," or perhaps, "brethren and sisters." But, wrong or right, the words were said, so with a hitch and a gasp, he repeated them and started fairly once more.

"Ladies and gentlemen!—our venerable bishop has kindly consented—to give a—a—synopsis—of his experience—ah—in this vale of tears. When I mention that our venerable father celebrated his golden wedding only a short time ago, you will judge for yourselves that his experience must have been of the most varied description."

Tremendous cheering, led by Raine, who with the rest of Young England had gathered in force in the back seats.

The bishop's gaunt face lit up with a genial smile as he heard the cheers. When there was silence he began thus, sitting in his chair:—

“Brethren and sisters and friends all,—It has been suggested to me that the presentation of some few facts from the storehouse of a long and varied experience might be of use to this young community. I have therefore concluded to address you in an informal way this evening, and not, as I am sure you will bear me witness, from any personal vain glory in the matter. But, we who are nearing the end of our pilgrimage can look back and see a pitfall spread here and escaped from; and there, maybe, a warning heeded; and there again, a warning not heeded; a temptation succumbed to and mourned over, or worse, not mourned over. Here again, a sorrow which time proved to be a blessing; and there again, a sorrow which remains a sorrow, a burden which we must carry whether we will or no, till we lay down our earthly burden once for all. Yes, we who set out before you, and have nearly reached the end of the pilgrimage which you are beginning, can tell of all that.”

There was a murmur of assent, and then the bishop began again in a more colloquial tone.

“Well, my dear young friends,—I see some of you are quite youthful,—you look to me like a company of brides and bridegrooms taking you as a lot. God bless you all, my dear young people. May your

days be long in the land, and may your children, and your children's children, rise up and call you blessed.

"When I was a young man," as young as a good many whom I see here, I was sent 'way down in Georgia, to a little place called Loomis. It was a city, but it wasn't so much of a city as it is now, they tell me. I reckon when you'd gone up Main Street and Church Street, you'd seen pretty much all there was to see.

"There was a parsonage, of course; but, being a bachelor, it was supposed best that I should board around among the members of the Church. We—ll, boarding around has its advantages and it has its disadvantages; and I expect I learnt pretty much what there was of both before I got through.

"Sometimes a young pastor is expected to keep to his chamber all the time except when he is called to meals. That was the case in one place I was at. When I took a stroll around the place or went into the garden—I love to see a good garden with a plenty of garden sauce in it and a rosebush or two in the corners—whenever I went there for a stroll or a little meditation, the good lady of the house would ask me how I could do with so little study. I couldn't get her to see that if I studied all the time the quality of my sermons would suffer. She was a mighty good woman, and I doubt not she's been in glory for many a year, but I've always thought she took pattern by the woman Solomon speaks of: you know that good lady was up by candle-light all the year round, and she kept her eye upon everybody, and I

should say she was a mighty uncomfortable woman to board with.

“Well, then I went to another place, and though it was winter time they didn’t seem to think I should want any fire. There was never a fire in the parlour, of course unless the young ladies had their beaux. For beaux, and for funerals, that fire would be lit, so I was given to understand : not for young bachelor ministers. If I’d wanted to be a beau, ’twould have made a difference, no doubt ; but I didn’t. I tried carrying up a basket of chips to my room, but the chimney smoked so I had to give it up and freeze. Now friends,” said the bishop with a waggish motion of his forefinger, “it has not been within my experience that a man’s sermons are any the better for being meditated under the influence of frost-bite. When his limbs are congealed, his learning and his love of his fellow creatures, as well as his love of God, are likely to congeal too. That’s a fact. If any of you want to bring out the best that is in a man, begin by making that man comfortable. Now I’d like the ladies to make a note of that !

“We—ll !—I boarded around here, and I boarded around there ; and in some places I was nearly killed with kindness, and in some places I was kept under good discipline. And at last it so happened that there was a dispute which grew to be quite a split, between the two most prominent members of my congregation. I had been pressed to board with each, and I didn’t want to quarrel with either ; so I concluded to pitch

my tent in the parsonage, which had been left to the tenancy of rats and mice and what not. I bought a bedstead second hand—very second hand as I recollect—and I got a farmer to fill me a tick with straw, and I got me a table and a lamp, and set up as a solitary.

“‘Single-blessedness,’ they call it. Well, I was single certainly, but I don’t know so much about the blessedness. I tried it for a year or so, and gave myself a fair chance of learning practically how Peter the Hermit and those other solitary old saints of olden time must have made out. I don’t want to give my experience for more than it is worth; but I tell you I came to the conclusion that those solitary saints must have been pretty lopsided sort of creatures. I thought I’d given it a fair trial, and now I’d try to get some one to keep house for me. I found—my wife, who like myself was poor in this world’s goods, and was teaching school for her living. For I had determined”—and here he lifted up his hand and pointed a finger, and Mr. Macgregor, who sat in the middle of the church, could have sworn that he was the man pointed at—“I had determined never to marry a woman who was richer than I was. Mark me!—where the purse is, there the power is. I did not propose”—said the bishop, emphasizing each word with a rap of the index finger on his left palm—“I did not propose to have it thrown in my teeth by any woman in after years that she had supported me, or that the power of her money had lifted me up.

“When I married, I had eleven dollars, and she had seven, and with this we started in life at Okechobee.

“Friends, how many of you have married wives that

had seven dollars for their fortune? Won't anybody hold up their hand? No! Well, here's a bit more of my experience. I shall never be happier than I was at that time. My wife has been the safest investment I ever made. Clergymen, you know, are not supposed to understand anything about making money. But she seemed to make the money for me, somehow. And if we had none, she knew to do without at least as well as I did. And she has been from the first a good and safe counsellor. That is something worth thinking about, too. How many of you will be able to say that of your wives after fifty years?"

("I say, you know," whispered Huish to Raine at this juncture, "three cheers for the missus. I'd lead off only my voice has given out." Raine bid him shut up, and went on listening.)

"Yes," said the bishop, and once more a smile illuminated his rugged, homely countenance,—“we started poor, and we were poor for a good many years. I could tell you of a time when the hearts of the brethren had grown cold, and my stipend was behindhand, and we were sustained for thirteen weeks by grace, dried apples, and corn bread, with what buttermilk people chose to donate us, and just what meat could be bought for five dollars. That was an experience which had its uses, I doubt not, but I cannot say I've hankered after a repetition of it. Just once was enough and great plenty. And I reckon you, ministers and laymen, would say the same.”

There was a little ripple of laughter in the back seats, and Raine declared afterwards that the bishop had winked.

The bishop resumed in tones of greater gravity. "When I look back, I sometimes think that a special blessing must have rested on our marriage fifty years ago. We have never wanted any good thing : by which I mean anything that was good for us. We have raised and educated a large family of children who are all doing well, and I say to you all, go and do likewise. But," he continued, holding up a warning finger, "under the same conditions, remember !

"We practised self-denial. So must you. There was no self-indulgence, no smoking, no dram drinking, —not even for the good of our stomachs. Timothy could afford it, or else Paul would not have advised him to drink even a little wine. I could not afford wine or strong drink of any sort, even in moderation. I don't take extreme views, but who's to say I am not the better now for that abstemiousness ?

"And my wife, she had to do without women's gew-gaws. So must you, young wives. She was diligent in her household, and a keeper at home. So must you be. She did her own work and—I remember as if 'twere yesterday how pleased she was when I had managed to save money to buy her a sewing machine. We were among poor people then, and my salary, such as it was, came in dribblets. But I knew they did the best they could, and so we managed ;—we were determined never to get into debt, and we never did.

"Now the only way for young married people to do this is to deny themselves. It's no use saying, I must have this, I am bound to have that. No such thing. All you are bound to do is to keep out of debt.

God's blessing never rested on debt, and it never will.

"And another thing we had—and that was common-sense. My wife has a great gift that way. Now, my friends, some of you may think I've got along in life because of God's grace—some special grace attending me more than some other man. It is not so. There's a deal of God's grace lying around, but it remains inert because of not being applied properly.

"Well, my friends, I don't want to weary you." (Cries of "Go on.") "I'm obliged to you for listening to me so far; I don't feel like saying much more. I trust that your experience of life may turn out as satisfactory as mine has been as a whole. I have been young, and now I am old, and though I might have done better, as I see on looking back—hindsight is so much easier than foresight—still, still I am content. I do not think I would have chosen my life to be very different from what it has been. May you all look back, friends, with as much content when your course is nearly run."

There was tremendous cheering, for it was supposed that this was the close of the address. But the bishop raised his hand and appeared to wait for silence.

"There's just one thing more I'd like to say," he resumed. "I don't know whether this is a chilly country. Not to call chilly, eh?"

"Certainly not," answered Mr. Macgregor in resonant tones, for he thought he had caught the bishop's eye.

"Not chilly, eh? Glad to hear that. That's dollars in your pockets, all the time. Now there you all have

the pull of me ; for when I was a young man my lot was cast in a very chilly country. Parts of Georgia are as chilly as they well can be.

“However, I was going to say to you, young house-keepers, when the day has been rainy, no matter if it’s in the middle of summer, always have a bit of fire in the evening. It dries up the air and keeps the moisture from clinging to the walls, and”—the bishop’s eye twinkled—“it gives heart to the good man of the house when he comes in to rest from his labours.”

The rector rose and declared that the thanks of the meeting were due to the bishop for his most interesting and fatherly address ; which resolution was carried with applause, while the irrepressible Huish jumped on a seat and demanded three cheers for Mrs. Thrasher.

As Mary Ellacombe was going out behind her mother, she felt her arm pulled, and looking round saw Raine at her elbow.

“Wait one minute,” he whispered, drawing her within the space between a row of vacated chairs. “Mary, darling, did you listen to what the bishop said ?”

She nodded. “Let me go on. Mother will miss me,” she whispered.

“He had eleven dollars and she had seven, and they married and were happy. Why, Mary, we should never be as poor as that !”

“Mother said—Oh, you don’t know what she said ! Please, please let me go,” said Mary, blushing and trembling.

"Look here, Mary, I'm going to have you if I wait two hundred years." He pressed her hand and she was presently lost in the crowd.

Mrs. Bloss thought that very few women would have had as much smartness as she had shown in mentioning to the bishop the shortcomings of her husband's congregation. She believed that the bishop's recital of his early struggles was intended as a hint to those members of the flock whose contributions lagged behind. Mr. Bloss was not quite so sure; the judicial tone of the bishop's questions as to the circumstances of the people, and the silence he had kept afterwards were an argument to Mr. Bloss that the bishop had peradventure taken the wrong side. But on a day when Mrs. Bloss had announced that she was expecting a dumb chill, he knew better than to contradict, much less argue with her.

Sylvia was up with the dawn, and by the time Miss Priest was out of her room she had a quantity of notes written, which she was sending off by the negro errand boy. She told Miss Priest that she had come to the conclusion during the night that the bishop would be rather an incubus if she had to entertain him for a whole day, so she had written invitations to as many as she could accommodate at dinner, and would have an impromptu garden party for the rest. Miss Priest suggested that if she boarded the bishop, she ought to make Mr. Bloss come and entertain him. What else was the rector good for, if he could not sit on the porch and talk? Sylvia, with some hesitation, confessed

that she had not thought of inviting Mr. Bloss. She thought perhaps Mrs. Bloss might take it ill if she invited her husband to dinner on a day which had been announced beforehand as a dumb chill day, and proposed instead to send a ready-cooked dinner to the rectory. Miss Priest guessed that the worse the day for Mrs. Bloss, the more glad the rector would be to get away. But Sylvia rebuked her friend for her evil insinuations, and in the next breath confessed that she was not very anxious to have the rector on her own account.

"He does not mean any harm, poor man, but he seems to me to be always saying something which might be left unsaid," Sylvia remarked. "I suppose all that nursing and sitting up has made me a little nervous, but I confess that I look forward with dismay rather than amusement to a few hours of his *mal-à-propos* sayings. So if you don't mind——"

"As if I should break my heart if I never saw him again!" cried Miss Priest.

Nearly all Harmonia came to meet the bishop. The big people came to dinner and the little people came to the garden party. Mrs. Lovett forsook her sofa, and made a supreme effort for once in her life; Mrs. Macgregor left her dairy work, and appeared in all the glory of her Forty-second tartan and her coral bracelets and *négligée*. Mrs. Tregellas came with her husband, and Raine came in hopes of meeting Mary. Miss Priest carried out a basket of apples on the porch to help to while away the time before dinner. Mrs. Macgregor, whose private grudge against Mr. Bloss

had never abated since his accusation of her husband, thought that this was an opportunity such as might not occur again to make the bishop sensible of the unsuitability of Mr. Bloss for his position. She gave a hint to her husband that he might, if he pleased, say a word, but Mr. Macgregor scouted the idea. He had received the rector's apology and had dismissed the matter from his mind. He went so far as to desire her on no account to give a hint of the matter. But Mrs. Macgregor was in no mood to accede to his desire. She knew that unless they could sell their farm profitably, they would have to stay where they were, and a profitable buyer had not appeared yet. And if they were to stay for another year or two, how much better would it be for themselves and for the rest of the parishioners to have a young bachelor minister who could board around as the bishop had described in his address.

She felt in no way uneasy at the idea that she was going to work against Mr. Bloss in an underhand way. Mr. Bloss himself could on occasion be underhand in his methods, and if she used his own weapons against him it was but fair. She lost no time after dinner in placing her views before the bishop.

He had remained sitting in the porch for a time with the other gentlemen, but after a while—that is to say when the post-prandial cigar was smoked—he bethought himself that as he had been so far “all things to all men,” so now it was time to be all things to all women. So seeing a couple of ladies approaching the porch, he walked forth to meet them. Mrs. Lovett,

who stuck close to Mrs. Macgregor, envied her coolness and readiness in placing the state of affairs before the bishop.

She had been intent on impressing on Mrs. Macgregor that an American bishop, even an Episcopal one, was not so very much of a bishop. She herself had had the happiness of sheltering the Bishop of Woolloomooloo during a storm, and his lordship had been most affable. She had reminded Mrs. Macgregor that American bishops were never addressed as "my lord," and Mrs. Macgregor had informed her scornfully that there was small need of telling a Scotch Presbyterian such a thing as that. Mrs. Macgregor had endeavoured to get the bishop all to herself, because she was afraid Mrs. Lovett would be so desirous of attracting his attention to herself that she would break in and destroy the weight of her presentment. But Mrs. Lovett though she stuck like a burr to Mrs. Macgregor, did not venture to interrupt. She saw that the bishop was surprised and attentive, and she promised herself an airing of her own grievance presently.

"I'll speak of nothing that does not immediately concern me," said Mrs. Macgregor, when she had told her story in as succinct a manner as was to be expected. "But ye can understand well, Dr. Thrasher, that it is not for our spiritual edification that we should have such a person for our rector; a man that's always at loggerheads with one or other of his parishioners."

"There was his own churchwarden threatened to knock him down if he didn't apologise," said Mrs. Lovett.

"Tut, tut, tut," said the bishop. "There was something—I remember seeing something—was it in a newspaper? or, yes,—I heard from Mr. Bloss himself, but I thought whatever it was, it was amicably settled."

"It was smoothed over, after a fashion; but there has never been any good feeling since. We did intend at one time to give up attending church, but we thought better of it."

"I am glad you thought better of it," said the bishop. "It is not good to cease assembling yourselves together. I am no great stickler for forms, but still—"

"Of course it is better to go to church if one can. We quite feel that. But really, even if he made himself pleasant, which he does not, he is so illeeterate, that he would do very little good," said Mrs. Macgregor.

"Illiterate?" said the bishop.

"I call him extremely illeeterate, compared with any Scotch meenister I've ever known."

"Perhaps the Scotch ministers you knew were remarkable for their attainments," said the bishop with a suspicion of a smile at one corner of his mouth.

"I never heard them considered extraordinary learned. They just seemed suited to the congregation."

"Well, you know this is a new place. What can you expect in an obscure little city? You don't look for a brilliant preacher in a place that isn't three years' old do you?"

"I'm not expecting brilliancy," said Mrs. Macgregor

in her most stolid manner. "I don't look beyond plain common sense, and a discourse logically presented."

The bishop laughed and said that common sense was the most uncommon thing in this world. Then feeling that he had heard enough of Mr. Bloss's shortcomings, he tried to turn the conversation. But Mrs. Lovett was too sharp for him.

"'Tis not only the common sense that's lacking; he is so ill-natured. He wouldn't christen Mrs. Tregellas's baby, and he has said such dreadful things of me and my husband!"

"Tut, tut, tut," said the bishop.

"It is a fact. He goes about and complains because I don't send him things, poultry and butter and that. And he knows as every one does that my health is so bad I can't do much in that way. I should drop down and die if I had to milk nine cows like Mrs. Macgregor; and as for Tom—that's my husband—I assure you he gives what he can afford, and owing to the drought he didn't get back enough wheat to pay the expense of sowing—that's farming in Harmonia!—And yet Mr. Bloss had the cruelty to say publicly that I and my husband did so little for him that we ought to be put out of the Church." And up went Mrs. Lovett's handkerchief to her eyes.

"Tut, tut, tut," said the bishop. "A very improper speech. Very improper. That is, if he did make it," he added.

"Oh, no doubt of that. Plenty heard him say it. I could tell you of two who did, if you require corroboration to my word."

The bishop looked round for a way of escape from the two ladies. "Tut, tut, tut. You should get rid of him. Why don't you get rid of him?"

"That is preceesely what we wish to do," said Mrs. Macgreggor.

"But you know, if you expect an angel you won't get one. There is always something—always something."

"Dr. Thrasher," said Mrs. Macgregor, "we don't expect an angel, nor an archangel. But do ye mean to tell me that in all your diocese there isn't a man to be found with more sense, or more scholarship, than Mr. Bloss? Because if so, I'm truly sorry for your Episcopal Church."

With this parting thrust Mrs. Macgregor retired and left the field to Mrs. Lovett. The bishop gave a sigh of relief at the disappearance of his chief tormentor. He had so wished to have a real holiday when he went to the Alum Springs! He had left that cool abode in an evil hour, to address a meeting on a subject in which he was interested, and lo! here he was in the midst of a set of parishioners at loggerheads with their parson!

"Is that lady a member of the Episcopal Church?" he inquired of Mrs. Lovett. Mrs. Lovett replied that she was a Scotch Presbyterian. The bishop thought privately that that fact minimised to a great extent the value of her testimony. But Mrs. Lovett assured him that Mrs. Macgregor's grievance was a genuine one notwithstanding.

"I don't say that Mr. Macgregor has never been seen tight, because people have seen him—very tight.

But on this occasion I really do think he was sober—pretty sober, at any rate.”

“Not the other side of half tight, eh?” said the bishop pleasantly. And then, Mrs. Lovett pursued, who was Mr. Bloss, that he should rule his parish with such a rod of iron? He never refused a nip of whiskey or apple brandy, and she had seen him with her own eyes buy a pint tickler of old Bourbon in a grocery at Jonesville. And very particular about the brand, too. No mean whiskey for him if you please.

“Tut, tut,” said the bishop. “Very extravagant, very extravagant. He should buy it by the barrel. You should tell him so.”

“Me tell him!” said Mrs. Lovett, who thought the bishop must have taken leave of his senses. “Why, bishop, do you know how much a barrel of whiskey costs?”

The bishop declared he had not the least idea; but that reasoning by analogy he was quite sure buying a barrel of whiskey came cheaper in the end than buying a tickler at a time.

“Oh, if you mean to take Mr. Bloss’s part, I’m sure I can have nothing more to say,” said Mrs. Lovett, retiring with dignity. She told every one she met that afternoon that she felt sure Bishop Thrasher must be a little cracked; a good old man, no doubt, but a little cracked.

The bishop smiled a gentle smile as he saw Mrs. Lovett move off. He walked a little farther in the garden and presently came upon a sheltered bench on which he seated himself and fell into a doze.

When he opened his eyes they rested on a very good-

looking young gentleman, Huish to wit, who was reclining on the other end of the bench. Huish hoped he was not disturbing the bishop, and the bishop hoped he was not disturbing Huish, and then Huish informed him that he had been ill and had not got his strength back yet. He was inclined to be communicative, and the bishop found himself on the way to possess as much information about Harmonia as he could desire.

"'Pon my word," said Huish, when he had told all Harmonia's misfortunes, and the bishop had expressed his sorrow at the ill-luck of the infant community,—"'pon my word, I think sometimes I'll throw it all up and go in for storekeeping. The only people who haven't dropped money are the storekeepers, and—of course—the parson. He's all right, you bet he is. Bound to come out right side up whatever happens."

"I should suppose that the minister would be apt to suffer if his flock suffered," said the bishop. "In my experience it has always been so."

"Well, you can't get blood out of a stone; and I suppose if people have not got it to give they can't give it, no matter how much Bloss may fret and fume. But Bloss is a 'cute customer—very—makes a great outcry about what he doesn't get and is very mum about what he does get; and has as fine a nose as any lady's lap-dog to smell out a good dinner. People say he bleeds Miss Luttrell like—like anything. Never came near me while I was ill. Not that I wanted to see him. Oh, no!"

"It is a pity," said the bishop, "when members of a Church are not on good terms with their pastor."

"An uncommon pity, I quite agree with you, my lord. But if Bloss will be so slanderous, what is to be done? In my own case, I don't bear the least malice. He apologised after a fashion, and one must let bygones be bygones. Only, when a man has behaved like that, one naturally gives him a wide berth."

The bishop said gravely that he was sorry there should have been any dispute. Huish laughed and said it was not worth talking about, and immediately told the bishop all about it from beginning to end.

"In a parish like this," said the bishop when Huish had finished, "an arbitrator would be kept busy all the time."

Huish laughed and said they ought to elect one at the next vestry meeting. He thought Bloss was a great fool for not using his opportunities better. He would act so differently were he in Bloss's place. "Put me here and you'd see how popular I'd be. I don't believe I should have to go about whining at an empty larder as Bloss is constantly doing. And you bet I'd have all the young ladies in love with me inside of three months. And my voice is a very fair tenor, not extensive, but good as far as it goes; and I can roll out a sermon as well as any man alive. It makes me sick to hear Bloss. Such a poor delivery,—don't you know."

"I have not heard him," said the bishop.

"Well, my lord, if you are a friend of his you should advise him to take a few lessons in elocution."

"Sir," said the bishop, "I perceive that you address me by a title to which I have no claim.

American bishops, sir, do not lord it over God's heritage."

"Of course not," cried Huish. "I am sure no one would dream of saying you did. The fact is, my l——"

"Sir, my name is Thrasher; the Reverend Dr. Thrasher, sir."

"Dr. Thrasher, I beg ten thousand pardons," said Huish. "Fact is, I am so used to say 'my lord' to my uncle the bishop—the Bishop of Doldrum—of course you've heard of him—that it seems to come naturally."

The bishop waved his hand, a motion which Huish took for absolution; but before he could think of a fresh topic of conversation the bishop rose and began walking towards the house.

"By Jove!" said Huish who had risen and was following the bishop, "there comes Bloss, as fat as usual. If you'll excuse me, Dr. Thrasher, I'll take another turn. I never shake hands with Bloss if I can help it. Not from malice, don't you know, but because under the circumstances one naturally gives the fellow a wide berth."

The bishop bowed slightly: Huish took off his hat with a flourish, and turned back. No one could have supposed from Sylvia's smiling countenance what irritation she felt at that moment against the Reverend Josiah Bloss. His appearance after her having sent, at some inconvenience, a dinner to the rectory all ready cooked to save Mrs. Bloss trouble, seemed to her the greatest instance of impertinance she had ever met with.

Mr. Bloss was quite ready with an explanation. Mrs. Bloss, he said, feeling herself unexpectedly better, had desired him to go and do his part in entertaining the bishop.

Sylvia thanked him coldly. She had not found it at all difficult to entertain Dr. Thrasher.

But Mr. Bloss was not capable of taking the hint. "Mrs. Bloss expected the bishop would find it a bit dull, and of course we know that in a house presided over by ladies only——"

"Mr. Tregellas and the doctor have been excellent company for the bishop, so far," said Sylvia.

"Ah, yes, I see you have quite a gathering, and anything of the kind would have been quite beyond us. Of course the people would be delighted to meet the bishop, but I thought anyhow I should like to have a little quiet talk with Dr. Thrasher myself, as this is an opportunity that may not occur again."

Sylvia wondered why he could not have said so at first.

It was quite true that Mrs. Bloss had urged her husband to go to Miss Luttrell's uninvited. From her usual post of observation, the rocking chair, she had seen most of her friends' buggies passing up the street just as they used to do when Miss Luttrell was having her Thursday parties. Besides this, the negro boy who brought the dinner was in a great hurry to have the basket back, saying that Miss Priest had dared him to loiter, because Miss Sylvia was expecting company. On hearing this Mrs. Bloss had examined him with severity to know whether he had not had a note given him for Mr. Bloss, but the boy had declared with many solemn

asseverations that he had delivered all the notes "soon in de morn" and that there had not been one for the rectory.

Mrs. Bloss protested to her husband that it was the strangest thing she had ever heard of. There must surely be some mistake. Any parishioner entertaining the bishop would think of inviting the rector before any one in the parish.

Mr. Bloss confessed that it was a strange inadvertence : yet he hardly thought she could have intended to invite him to dinner since she had taken the trouble to send a dinner down. Nevertheless after the dinner had been eaten he allowed himself to be persuaded. What was jelly and roast chicken, said Mrs. Bloss, but an invalid's dinner? If Miss Luttrell had intended it for him as well as herself, surely she would have sent something more substantial. How did Mr. Bloss know that the bishop might not be gone by to-morrow? And what would he think of a clergyman who allowed him to leave the neighbourhood without a respectful farewell? And what would the people think, when they were all gathered together to meet the bishop, and their pastor was absent? Mr. Bloss suggested that they would think he hadn't been invited, or that she was ill. But Mrs. Bloss declared that if he really had not been invited, it was his duty not to put up with such an insult. And as for the supposition that she was ill, she would not keep him at home on such a pretext, no, not if she were dying. Above all things it was necessary for him that all men should see him on friendly terms with his bishop: whether he stayed at Harmonia or whether he left Harmonia.

So Mr. Bloss brushed himself up, and took his best hat, and went to Miss Luttrell's, to that lady's surprise and annoyance.

When Mrs. Bloss heard a few days later, that Miss Luttrell was going to take a party to the Alum Springs, she felt quite certain that she would be one of the invited, and began looking over her wardrobe; but when day after day passed and there was no sign of Miss Luttrell at the rectory, or even at church, she felt uneasy. She turned the matter over and over in her mind and tried to hope that she might be invited later. She took the trouble to go and spend an afternoon with Mrs. Macfarlane, to find out what there was to be found out; but she came home more troubled in mind than when she set out. Mrs. Macfarlane had not asked her to take off her hat; and she did not give her so much as a basket of pickling cucumbers to take home. And she had said Miss Luttrell had asked her to go, but that she had declined. Though Mrs. Macfarlane was uncommunicative Mrs. Bloss did succeed in learning that Mrs. Tregellas had been asked to go too, but had declined; and that she had sent a poor English family to the Springs, paying half their expenses, while Miss Luttrell paid the other half. Mrs. Macgregor was going, but on her own "hook," as she took care to let every one know.

But when, one sunny morning, Mrs. Bloss from her coign of vantage on the porch, saw Miss Luttrell driving a covered cabriolet with Mr. Denning and Mrs. Lovett in the back seat, and a spring waggon following it, containing luggage, Miss Priest, the driver and some un-

known white people, she felt sure that this was the setting out of the convalescent party to the Springs, and she retired to her own room and wept.

She was certain now that there must have been some mischief-making, and that it had been begun about the time of the bishop's coming. She cross-examined Mr. Bloss to find out what Miss Luttrell's precise demeanour had been on that afternoon when he had gone uninvited. It was in vain that Mr. Bloss declared that she had looked just as usual. Mrs. Bloss said men were always stupid about observing people's looks and Mr. Bloss was stupider than most men; had she been there she would have seen with half an eye if anything had been wrong.

Mr. Bloss could not gainsay such a statement. When a woman declares she can see with half an eye, what is the good of her husband saying she wants a whole pair to see with? He suggested patience and wariness, and hinted that it was after all possible she might be invited later on. He knew the Springs would be kept open till October, because the Major had said so.

But when October was more than half gone, and a light frost had touched the forest leaves and yet no invitation came, Mrs. Bloss declared that Miss Luttrell's neglect of her would fret her to death.

"Why don't you write and offer to join her party?" said Mr. Bloss at last. He was almost fretted to death himself with his wife's continual complaints and regrets.

Mrs. Bloss had thought of this but had not had courage to do it. What was she to do, she asked, if her

money ran short and Miss Luttrell did not offer to pay her board bill? Mr. Bloss reminded her that there was a special Providence for her as well as for every other minister's wife.

"We know how the apostles went forth," he suggested. Mrs. Bloss replied that that might have been all very well in those countries, but she never heard of the apostles carrying their wives along when they started out on a preaching tour. And she had never heard of any minister's wife that wanted to visit around unless she could do it like a lady.

"Well, anyhow," said Mr. Bloss, "if you wrote, you'd get an answer one way or the other, and then we should see how the land lay."

But in the end it was Mr. Bloss who wrote the letter for Mrs. Bloss. It would be so much easier, she said, for him to speak of her state of health than for her to do so; besides, he was accustomed to write letters and she was not. So Mr. Bloss sat down—not very unwillingly—and wrote a letter partly his own, and partly dictated by his wife. It was, they both thought, a moving letter, and as Mrs. Bloss remarked when Mr. Bloss went out to post it, if she had got the dumb chills she was bound to work them for all they were worth.

"That woman wants to come!" was Sylvia's exclamation when she read the letter. "Miss Priest, dear, what am I to do?"

Miss Priest picked up the letter which Sylvia in her dismay had let fall. She read it, and then, handing it to Sylvia, sat down and laughed till she cried.

"We were getting along so comfortably!" said Sylvia with a sigh.

"Why, Sylvy, you don't mean to say you'd have her here?" said Miss Priest.

"I don't want to have her; but that is not the question."

"Then what is the question, I'd like to know?"

"What ought I to do? I have money, and she has none. That is the case, plainly stated."

"Yes, and that woman is smart enough to know your weak side too," said Miss Priest. "You are a perfect goose, Sylvy, and that's all about it. If I were you I'd write back and say the house was full."

"Do you think she would feel it unkind if I sent her some money to go anywhere else?" said Sylvia, taking no notice of Miss Priest's suggestion.

"Unkind! I presume money is the principal thing they're after, both of 'em. In your place I wouldn't send 'em a red cent."

"If they were here I might be able to persuade her to leave off poisoning herself with arsenic and quinine," said Sylvia. "It is that that is causing these dumb chills, of course."

"It don't matter much anyhow; because if she wasn't swallowing that she'd be swallowing something else."

But Miss Priest managed to make Sylvia see that for other people's sake besides her own, it would not do to sacrifice herself and let Mrs. Bloss join the party. More especially as, if Mrs. Bloss was asked to come, Mr. Bloss might consider himself tacitly included in the invitation.

Miss Priest quite believed he was equal to that or to any other piece of impertinence.

"You know she can't abide Mrs. Lovett, and Mrs. Lovett can't abide her. And as for dear old Mr. Denning, I believe the bare sight of Mr. Bloss would be enough to give him a backset that he'd never get over."

Miss Priest's counsel prevailed; and Sylvia salved her conscience by inclosing a cheque for twenty-five dollars to Mr. Bloss, with regrets that circumstances did not allow her to ask Mrs. Bloss to join her party.

"There's something underhand been going on," said Mrs. Bloss, when she had read the letter and examined the cheque. "You'll never make me believe that there isn't: and I say that Miss Priest is at the bottom of it."

Mr. Bloss, taking up the cheque, remarked that she was welcome to be at the bottom of a good deal more if the result was a twenty-five dollar cheque each time.

"It's just as well as it happens," said Mrs. Bloss after due consideration. "Twenty-five dollars will be plenty to take you and me and Willie to pa's and back, and if you do miss a service I don't see as anybody will be hurt. Or you could ask Mr. Trelease to take the service. There'll be no boarding expenses at pa's, and I can do with the dresses I have. If I'd gone to the Springs I'd have wanted a new dress or two."

CHAPTER VII.

IS HE A TRAMP ?

WHEN the summer began, Raine's perseverance had already so far won upon his father that he had the promise of enough money within six months, to make the first payment for a quarter section. There were two at about an equal distance from the town, and nearly matched in advantages—or disadvantages—the croakers would have said ; and as Raine felt a difficulty in deciding between the two, what was more natural than that he should seek Mr. Ellacombe's advice ? Nor was the old man an unwilling adviser. But Mrs. Ellacombe was quite certain Mr. Raine would never do any good on a farm. He would set up in high style, buy all the latest improved machinery, and spend all his money and be sold up in six months.

“ You can't make a farmer out of a gentleman, any more than you can make a silk purse out of a sow's ear,” she said, when her husband declared his belief that young Raine would prove himself an exception to the rule.

Sometimes the talking and advising would go on so long that tea-time would find them with papers and pencils and farm books spread out on the table. What could be done but ask the young man to tea? Once when Cleopatra was "getting 'ligion" at a protracted meeting and Mrs. Ellacombe carried away the tea-things herself, what did Raine do but seize Mary's hand and kiss it repeatedly before Mrs. Ellacombe could get back from the kitchen. He shook hands and said good-bye immediately after, leaving Mary in a tremor of delightful bewilderment. He had taken her left hand, and all the kisses—every one of them—were impressed on the fourth finger. Could anything have been more tenderly suggestive, or more respectful?

Raine managed so to impress upon his father that in buying a tract on which a discouraged settler had begun to build a house he was making a wonderful bargain, that Lord Raine allowed himself to be prevailed on to send the money at once to make the first payment and enable the discouraged settler to turn his face to the old country. He had begun to build without counting the cost, and Raine found himself the possessor of a house, roofed in to be sure, but unplastered and lacking doors and windows. Raine plastered a couple of rooms himself, and asked Mrs. Ellacombe boldly for some old *Illustrated London News* to paper them with. She could not refuse such a small thing, and then he grew bolder and asked her to show him how to make the paste to put them on. He was very proud of his two rooms, and prouder still of the acre of land which he ploughed and sowed in maize himself.

Then came the drought. Raine's corn crop which had been planted late, turned yellow and gradually dried up. Poor Raine found himself looking up at the sky and wishing, as so many others did, that the burning brightness could be overcast. Mrs. Ellacombe thought that now surely he would leave Harmonia in disgust. He was disgusted, but he was too much in love to be discouraged, and he stayed.

Then the sickness came; and Huish, who had shown much bravado when the doctor warned him to take care of his health, was one of the first to be attacked; and as his courage had been mere animal courage, he became the prey to the most abject terror as the disease took hold of him. Not a man or woman in the settlement was such a trouble to nurse and doctor as was Huish till the fever deprived him of his senses.

Raine came naturally in his trouble to the Ellacombes. They were never more in their element than when helping the sick and needy, and they took their turn with Raine night and day as if it were a matter of course. The negroes, frightened at the sick man's ravings, and disgusted at the peremptory stop put by Mrs. Ellacombe to their pilfering, went off without the ceremony of giving notice, and the food for the bachelor household was prepared by Mary; for Cleopatra, though she did not actually go away, was so much demoralized by her nightly attendance at the protracted meetings, that she was almost useless.

Mary heard from her father how wonderfully well Mr. Raine was behaving; even Mrs. Ellacombe had nothing but praise for his cheerfulness, steadfastness and readi-

ness in every emergency. She was forced to confess that such conduct was highly creditable to a gentleman who would not have so much as brushed his own coat at home. And it was still more to his credit that, when his father, hearing of the epidemic, sent him money to go home, he refused to go.

"It is all very well, but my father would not expect me to 'rat,' you know," was all the explanation he had given.

But Mary thought there was another reason, and blushed as she thought of it day after day.

At last a thunderstorm came and cooled the burning air and broke up the drought. And when a week had passed without a fresh case, Dr. Bontecoe said that the epidemic might be considered at an end.

It was taken as a matter of course by the Ellacombes that Huish should be asked to stay at their house as soon as the doctor would allow him to be moved. There was no word said of Mr. Raine coming, but it would be natural that he should pay a visit to his friend sometimes; Mary hardly dared acknowledge to herself how much she looked forward to such chance visits.

Early one morning Mary was churning and singing as she churned, when a shadow stood between her and the sun, and Cleopatra put her head in at the window and said, "Dars an ole man want spik to you."

Mary jumped up in a fright and asked in a whisper what sort of an old man it was.

Cleopatra could not tell; he was "right old," but he did not look like a tramp. He said he had lost his way.

Mary went to the door of the cookhouse, and there stood an old man in a suit of rusty black, who did not look like a tramp, to be sure, except that he was very dusty. He lifted his hat and spoke with an English accent, and Mary for one instant set him down as a retired waiter who had come out to Harmonia to invest his savings. The old waiter at the Green Dragon at Moretonhampstead looked just as rusty, though not quite so dusty, as this old man. But when Mary gave a second glance, she saw that the handkerchief which the old man drew out to wipe his forehead was white and fine, and that the skin of his hand was delicate, more delicate than her own; and she did not feel so sure that he was a retired waiter.

The old man explained that he had come out for an early stroll, and had missed the turning he had been told to take, so that he feared he must be going away from Harmonia instead of towards it. As soon as he began to speak Mary felt sure he was a gentleman; his voice came gently and softly, and not in jerks; Mrs. Tregellas spoke like that. Yet Mary still felt a little afraid, for she had heard many stories of tramps who had been gentlemen once upon a time, and had fallen from their high estate through evil doings. She answered guardedly that he was more than two miles from Harmonia; and then she tried to tell him clearly which path he must take to get back on the high road. He must be sure to leave a big chestnut-oak on the left. But when he asked how he was to know it was a chestnut oak, Mary was puzzled. There was a difference in the leaves, she said, and now they were beginning to

turn colour a little. Cleopatra leaned against the doorway and listened with negro nonchalance to the colloquy, and wondered whether Miss Mary was going to give the old man something to eat.

"Thar's a chestnut oak," said Cleopatra with a jerk of her chin. "Thar, see! 'Way up yonder."

"'Way up yonder" was half-way up the hill which the old man had just descended. He took out an old-fashioned tortoiseshell double eye-glass, and looked, but he evidently did not appear much the wiser.

"Well, well," he said, "I must do my best. Uphill, too, a good deal of the way, isn't it? I shall be *vacuus viator* with a vengeance by the time I get back to the hotel. Might I ask for a glass of water?"

Mary caught the sound of the Latin words, and was puzzled again. A tramp who had once been a gentleman might use Latin words from habit. (Mary had an idea that all gentlemen could talk Latin because of their spending so much time at school in learning how to make Latin poetry.) But the way in which he asked for the glass of water puzzled her most. It was done in a tone not admitting the possibility of a refusal, and yet there was an excess of courtesy in it which was so unlike a tramp. Tramps too were not in the habit of asking for glasses of water. They usually ordered a "square" meal, and mentioned their preference for veal or pork as it might be, and strong coffee with white sugar in it.

"You better be smart," Cleopatra observed, as she handed the old man a glass all dripping from a freshly

drawn bucket of water, "else you won't strike the hotel till they've all done eat."

"That would be a pity," said the old man, "for I have not felt so hungry since I was a boy. This is a strange place," he continued, to Mary, as he sipped the water in little sips; "I am sensible of its being very hot, and yet I do not feel languid as I always do at Torquay for instance; and, though I have scarcely been here twelve hours, I feel intolerably hungry."

Mary for very shame could not be deaf to the hint. She went to the kitchen and poured out a cup of coffee, put a roll and butter on a plate, carried the food on a little waiter to the dairy, and asked the old man to sit down and eat. She shut the dining-room door as she passed, lest he should look in and see her mother's silver teapot and cream-ewer in the glass cupboard. Because after all it might be a tramp, and the Latin words and the reference to Torquay might only be meant for a blind. The old man seemed surprised, but he did not refuse, and he ate up the roll and drank the coffee with such unfeigned good appetite that Mary was obliged to ask him whether he would not have some more. She was glad however when he refused, and then she offered to go with him a little way, so that he should not miss the path. They went, Cleopatra following closely and listening to their conversation, which mystified her completely, for it was all about the formation of the rocks, which the old man declared to be volcanic. He took off his hat when they got to the top of the hill and made a grand bow to Mary which seemed to include Cleopatra in its sweep. Mary felt as if she ought to curtsy in

return, but she only nodded a good morning, and as soon as he was hidden by the trees, she and Cleopatra raced down the hill and back to the house.

"Well," thought Mary, "I hope I did right in giving him something to eat. I don't believe he could have been a tramp. Tramps don't trouble their heads about volcanic formations; and besides, he didn't walk as if he were accustomed to rough roads. Perhaps he is going to look round and buy up land, cheap, now that so many people are discouraged."

Before Mary had finished her breakfast her father came in. He had a great piece of news to tell. Lord Raine had arrived at Harmonia by the last night's train, and had sent out a messenger to his son to come and see him at the hotel. Mrs. Ellacombe had intended coming home with her husband, but as Mr. Raine would be away a good part of the morning, she would stay with Mr. Huish till he came back. Mary told her father of the visit she had had early from a strange old man, and Mr. Ellacombe said very likely he was one of those land speculators. He had no sympathy with such, because they fattened on other people's misfortunes; however Mary was right not to send him away hungry.

Two days later Lord Raine came to see Mr. Ellacombe and was closeted with him for a long while. When he was going he asked to be introduced to Miss Ellacombe, and, Mary being called in, saw the same old man in rusty black whom she had half suspected of being a tramp.

Mary was almost overcome. Lord Raine however did

not seem to notice her confusion, and shook hands with her very kindly, declaring that he was indebted to her for the best breakfast he had ever eaten in his life. His business with Mr. Ellacombe had been to find out his opinion whether his son had any chance of succeeding as a farmer, and whether Harmonia would be likely to be permanently unhealthy. Mary heard all about it at dinner-time from her father, who felt not unreasonably elated because his lordship had asked his advice rather than Major Forepaw's.

"Do you think Mr. Raine likely to stay?" Mary ventured to ask.

"Well, it's just as his lordship thinks. There's the first payment made, you know. The question with his lordship was whether, if he took this land for him, it would not be throwing good money after bad. No doubt Harmonia won't recover from this drought yet a while, but, as I said, there can't be droughts every year. Look at the trees in the uncleared bottoms. And as for the fever, you know Dr. Bontecoe declares that it was mostly the people's own fault that they got the fever. But I wasn't going to give an opinion on that head. I referred his lordship to Dr. Bontecoe."

When Mrs. Ellacombe came back in the evening she reported that young Mr. Raine had come in from seeing his father, in such high spirits that she thought he was demented.

"He took and danced the sailors' hornpipe till I thought he was pixy-laid," she said. "And when I begged him to stop, because he'd excite Mr. Huish, he went away to the stables and sang songs at the top of

his voice. And just before I came away he was doing conjuring tricks to keep up Mr. Huish's spirits, he said. And if Mr. Huish has a relapse after all that noise I sha'n't be surprised."

Mr. Ellacombe remarked that probably his lordship had made up his mind to continuing the payments for the land. The young man seemed to have taken a fancy to that piece of land, and would have felt a sort of disappointment if his father had thought it best to buy elsewhere for him.

"The best thing you could do for your own comfort," said Lord Raine to his son, "would be to engage a respectable couple to live in the house and look after things. I came upon just such a couple in my rambles; Cornish, I believe, and the man has been a sailor."

Raine laughed. "You must mean Rosevear and his wife. Bless you, they are on their own land; they are just as good as I am, and better."

"How better?" said his father.

"Because they have paid for their own land, and mine is being paid for by my father. That is why. Theirs is doubly theirs, you see."

"Uncommonly sound ideas to have," said Lord Raine. "Where did you pick them up?"

Raine laughed, and said he supposed they were in the air.

"It would simplify matters for me considerably if your brothers could get hold of such ideas," said Lord Raine; and then he shook his head and heaved a sigh of dissatisfaction, which Raine took to mean that he

had been lately called upon to pay money for one or the other of them. "However," he said, "you have kept within your allowance out here, as far as I know. If not, you may as well let me know. Debts have to be paid sooner or later."

Raine declared that not only did he owe nothing, but he was five pounds to the good; and he pulled out his purse and showed the money. Lord Raine smiled and said he thought it quite a remarkable fact.

"Well, now," said Raine, "I'll tell you what it is. Doing without things is positively an art; you may say it is a fine art. I knew there were certain persons here who believed that I must go to the bad anyhow, so I was bent on showing them that I needn't go unless I liked; and that's how I've saved five pounds."

Lord Raine took up his tortoiseshell eyeglass and looked at the money, which was in five-dollar bills of different issues and all stages of dirt and dilapidation.

He remarked that there must be some outlay in stocking the land, buying farming implements, and so forth. He was prepared to do anything in reason.

Raine said as to that, he had better consult old Ellacombe; the most honest farmer in Harmonia.

"And an uncommonly pretty daughter he has," Lord Raine observed. "Came upon her in her dairy, the first morning I was here; I don't think I ever tasted such coffee as she gave me. One hardly ever sees such a complexion nowadays; nothing of the Blowsalinda about her either, and not so very countrified. Seemed quite intelligent, and didn't talk bad grammar. Have those people been settled here long?"

Raine replied shortly in the negative. His father's praise of Mary Ellacombe seemed so many insults hurled at her. When Lord Raine said he would see Mr. Ellacombe again and ask him what outlay on the land would, in his judgment, be best, Raine did not offer to accompany him.

He had expected that as soon as his father had made up his mind how much he would disburse, he would feel there was nothing more to detain him in Harmonia. But Lord Raine had discovered an old college acquaintance in Mr. Denning, and he seemed to find a congenial occupation in sitting with him and talking of old times, and taking him for a daily drive. He even talked of taking Mr. Denning back to England with him; but Mr. Denning declined with a smile, saying that his next move would be only as far as the cemetery.

The longer Lord Raine stayed the more pleased he was with his son. He wondered how such a transformation should have been worked in so short a time; he had seen the downward tendencies in his son, without seeing how to counteract them. He had always considered him too great a fool even for a small clerkship in a government office. And here was this numbskull, this fool of the family, on the road to do more for himself than any one of his sons!

"I think," said Lord Raine, after some talk on the slipperiness of negro labour, "when I get back I will try to meet with a respectable couple that would come out and look after your house and so forth."

"Thanks; but it wouldn't do," said Raine. "In the

first place, no contract you make at home would be binding here, so I might find that if they fetched here at all, they would only stay a month or so, and then they'd be off to set up for themselves. The fact is"—Raine braced himself up as if for a plunge—"the fact is what a man wants here is—a wife."

"That is quite another pair of shoes, my dear fellow," said Lord Raine. "I am willing to do all I can for you, but I shouldn't quite see my way to supporting you in the luxury of a wife."

Raine began eagerly to argue that a wife in a new country was not a luxury but a necessity. "It's putting it on disgustingly low grounds, I admit, but a wife is a great save to a man in this country."

"Well, I have no objection, my boy, as soon as you can maintain one; of course I take it for granted that she would be a gentlewoman."

"I should rather say she was a gentlewoman, every inch of her!" said Raine angrily.

"Oh," said Lord Raine quietly. "Then you have made up your mind as to the person, eh?"

"I did that a long time ago," said Raine.

"Oh," said Lord Raine again. "I should like to see her, just for curiosity."

"You have seen her. It is Miss Ellacombe."

"The rustic nymph?" But *in petto* my lord said with great emphasis, "The—devil!"

"A very good sort of young woman in her way, no doubt," said Lord Raine after a pause. "But—really I do not wish to say anything offensive, but I cannot say

I should rejoice in having a farmer's daughter as my daughter-in-law."

"I am going to be a farmer," said Raine, "so why should I not marry a farmer's daughter?"

"There is something in that, as you put it. But you might marry a gentlewoman, one not born to great things, but yet a gentlewoman; who would, as you say, be a save to you."

"Wouldn't do at all," said Raine. "Look at my sisters. Could one of them make butter for market, or take care of poultry, or make bread if the cook got religion, or do any single thing that is wanted in a house, except put flowers in the vases?"

"I fear not. But," said Lord Raine after another pause, "these are things which any woman can learn, I suppose, if she chooses. What were you telling me of those English friends of yours, the Tregellases? Mrs. Tregellas is a case in point. A daughter-in-law such as that I should welcome gladly."

"But you don't meet with a woman such as that once in a lifetime. Besides, such an one wouldn't do for me. She is a universal genius; knows something about everything. Now a woman like that would have nothing to say to me, you know."

Lord Raine sighed a silent admission. "Well, genius or farmer's daughter, it comes to the same thing, I cannot give you an income on which to marry."

"You allow me a hundred a year. We could make that do very well indeed."

"My dear fellow," said Lord Raine gently, "you must be crazy!"

"I've figured it all out a hundred times," said Raine.

Lord Raine laughed. "I never heard of anything so crazy in my life."

"Now, you just ask Mrs. Tregellas if she doesn't think Mary the very wife for me," said Raine. "She pretends to be neutral, but I know she is fond of Mary. And there's another thing. Doesn't a man raise his wife to his own rank?"

"Technically, I admit that he does. Not otherwise."

"Well, then I am quite ready to sink to her level. What is good enough for her is good enough for me."

"Have you really quite made up your mind as to that?"

"Oh, my mind was made up long ago; when Tregellas had his house raising. Unfortunately it takes two to make a match."

"I am glad the young lady shows a little common-sense in the matter," said Lord Raine.

"Oh, she is not at all in a hurry, and her mother wouldn't hear of such a thing. She told me so."

"A very wise woman," said Lord Raine. "I fully agree with her."

"Well, my lord," said Raine, "you have been very kind to me, and I assure you I am not ungrateful. But—I am going to marry that girl. Not to-day, nor to-morrow, but some day. Look here now; when I fell in love with that girl, I was going to the dogs. If it hadn't been for her, I should have been in my grave before now, I do believe. You see, I had nothing to do; at least I hadn't settled down to the idea of doing anything, and so— The long and short of it is, she

saved me. I don't know what she said, or what she did: she never preached; I know that. But—she saved me.”

Lord Raine was silent for a long while. This, then, was the secret of the transformation he had wondered at. He was not an unreasonable man; he knew it was no use to fight against the inevitable. But still, his son was very young, and there was no reason why his marriage with the farmer's daughter should be considered inevitable as yet. “There are so many slips,” thought he.

He was too much disturbed by what his son had told him to enjoy his chat with Mr. Denning that afternoon. Mr. Denning remarked it, and said that perhaps he was staying too long in Harmonia. The hot weather was not quite over yet, though the nights were longer and cooler.

Lord Raine said he was well enough—but—

“There is generally a ‘but,’ I think, in this world,” said his friend.

“The fact is, that boy of mine, who was beginning to turn out so much more satisfactorily than I expected, has fallen in love, or thinks he has; and there will be a wretched complication unless the gods befriend me more than I can hope they will. You may know the girl. Her name is Ellacombe.”

“Her father and mother were very good to me when I was ill. I found them the kindest people in the world.”

“I dare say,” said Lord Raine irritably. “But that doesn't make their daughter a fit wife for my son.”

"Of course not. And yet—your son has improved greatly since he came here, from all that I hear, and it is possible that this girl's influence may have had something to do with it. There is a fate in these things, I sometimes think."

"There shall not be a fate in this instance, if I can help it."

"Perhaps you will not be able to help it."

Lord Raine told his friend that he was a Job's comforter, and took his leave. He felt uncomfortable at what Mr. Denning had said, and walked down to have a talk with Mrs. Tregellas.

"Miss Ellacombe is a very good girl," said Edith.

"So it seems. Frankly now, I wish she were not," said Lord Raine. "No offence to you, if she is a friend of yours."

"I am very fond of her," said Edith.

"At the same time you wouldn't want her to marry your son if your son was my boy's age," said Lord Raine.

"No!" said Edith. "And yet—I must in fairness to Mary tell you that your son has been wonderfully improved by falling in love with her."

"Well, falling in love does sometimes tend to—a—certain mental development. But it is merely a means to an end."

There had been more moral improvement, Edith thought, than mental development.

"He told me this girl had saved him from going to the dogs," said Lord Raine.

"Did he say as much as that?"

"Yes; one must allow for some exaggeration in these

cases, of course. I'm sure I feel uncommonly indebted to the young lady. At the same time—Oh! why cannot we manage these things as they do in France!”

“From your point of view, it is a pity,” said Edith.

“Freedom of choice! Humbug! I believe freedom of choice has caused untold wretchedness.”

“I fear it will in this case,” said Edith, “for he is very much in love with her, and I suspect that she is attached to him, though she is too good a girl to disobey her parents.”

“Mrs. Ellacombe has always been against it, my son tells me.”

Edith assented. “Mrs. Ellacombe only thinks of her daughter's welfare, and she does not believe it will be promoted by stepping out of her own sphere.”

“Sensible woman!” said Lord Raine. “The girl is as pretty a creature as one could see—fine complexion, Greuze colouring, and all that, and not so very countrified; but as my daughter-in-law she would be quite a fish out of water. I couldn't introduce her to my daughters, couldn't have her at home—you understand.”

“I understand,” said Edith. “And yet, this girl's influence has been only for good.”

Lord Raine took his leave, declaring that Mrs. Treggallas was as much of a Job's comforter as his old friend Denning. He went across the hills and clearings as directed by Edith, and found himself at the Ellacombes' place towards the end of the afternoon. Huish had arrived, and had been taken up to his room to rest, and Mr. Ellacombe, who had driven the waggon, had

just sent it back by his negro farm-hand, and was in the barn finishing up the evening chores himself.

Mrs. Ellacombe begged his lordship to sit down in the parlour. She couldn't ask his lordship to "make use" of anything, because they were strict teetotalers, and her husband would not let a drop of spirits pass their threshold if it was ever so; but she would be glad to make a cup of tea for his lordship.

Lord Raine declined with outward courtesy, but an inward shudder. "To what depths must that wretched boy have fallen," he thought, "to contemplate calling such a dreadful creature as this his mother-in-law!"

"Perhaps," he said, with the deliberate softness of diction which Mary had noticed, "if Mr. Ellacombe is busy, I might say what I have to say to you."

If it was anything about Mr. Raine's business, Mrs. Ellacombe began, she would so much rather his lordship waited to see Mr. Ellacombe. She might deliver the message wrong.

"I am not sure that there will be any message to deliver," said Lord Raine. "I may as well tell you at once that my son has informed me of his wish to marry your daughter, and that I have refused my consent."

Mrs. Ellacombe, who had been standing, fell into a chair with a gasp.

"To tell you the truth," Lord Raine continued, "had he informed me of this love affair before I bought this property for him, I should have taken him back to England with me. I am very sorry I did not know of it before."

Mrs. Ellacombe recovered herself. "Then, my lord,"

she said, sitting up straight and putting her hands firmly on her knees, "I am very sorry I did not let your lordship know. For if there is one thing that I'm more set on than another, my lord, it is that my girl shall not marry your son."

"I am glad you see how unsuitable such a connection would be," said Lord Raine.

"Yes, my lord, I've seen girls persuaded by soft words before now. I know how they all talk when they are in love, all of 'em. They are going to reform and keep sober as long as they live. And then after the honeymoon is over, and the cares of life come upon them, then they backslide, and go a-wallowing in the mire. No, my lord, I'll take no such risk for my girl. She shall never be a drunkard's wife as long as I am alive to set my face against it. I mean no offence to your lordship, but my girl is the only one I have left, and——" Mrs. Ellacombe hid her face in her handkerchief.

Lord Raine looked grave. "I did not think it had ever been quite as bad as that," he said softly.

"That is my opinion, my lord. I don't deny that your son is reformed, now, as far as one can see. But how can any one say how far that will be? It would always be a risk, in my opinion; and it's a risk my girl shall not run. At the same time," Mrs. Ellacombe continued, "he's as nice a young gentleman as I ever wish to see. And if he were in our own walk of life and had always been sober, I don't say but what I'd be glad for Mary to think of him. But—things being as they are, Mary knows my mind, and she knows what her duty is and she'll do it."

Lord Raine murmured that it was highly creditable to her, and rose. He was about to shake hands, when Mr. Ellacombe came in, expressing sorrow at having kept his lordship waiting.

Lord Raine said it was of no consequence. He had said what he wished to say, and there was no necessity to repeat it unless Mrs. Ellacombe wished particularly that he should do so. He was sorry Mr. Ellacombe had been interrupted in his work, but he would take the opportunity of thanking him for his very kind advice and saying good-bye. Mr. Ellacombe looked at him and then at his wife, and was puzzled. Lord Raine spoke:

"I was telling Mrs. Ellacombe that I had made an unpleasant discovery. My son has unfortunately taken a fancy to your daughter, and of course Mrs. Ellacombe agrees with me that it could not be entertained for a moment."

"Taken a fancy!" Mr. Ellacombe murmured. "To my maid!"

"Well, he calls it being in love, of course. You no doubt agree with Mrs. Ellacombe and myself that it could not be thought of."

The old man was silent. Mrs. Ellacombe broke in abruptly, "That's what I say. It is not to be thought of. My girl shall not be a drunkard's wife."

Mr. Ellacombe put his hand up as if the word hurt him. "Oh, Betsey! Betsey!" he said softly. "I have looked on the young man as a brand saved from the burning."

"There are young men that ain't brands, to begin

with," said his wife, raising her voice in the stress of her anxiety in a way that jarred disagreeably on Lord Raine's ears. "You never know if a brand ain't going to burst out again. Please the Lord, she'll meet with a sober young man in her own walk of life. And if not, let her stop unmarried as long as she lives. And there's my last word, Mr. Ellacombe."

"Quite so," said Lord Raine. He shook hands with them both and made his escape.

"Good heavens!" he murmured, when he stopped to take breath on the top of the hill where Mary had shown him the chestnut oak; "to think of the folly a young fellow will commit all for a pair of blue eyes and a fine complexion!"

But he was a little shaken, and could not walk home with such an even step as he had set forth with. He had known that his son had been falling into bad ways before he sent him out, though he had never supposed that he was in danger of becoming an actual drunkard. He felt pained and humiliated by Mrs. Ellacombe's brusque outspokenness; but he did not question the truth of what she said. He could understand now Mrs. Tregellas's reticence.

Raine, when he was told by his father of his interview with Mrs. Ellacombe, remarked that the old woman had always been down on him from the first; but that time would show. He refused his father's offer to come home with him.

"If you really want to marry," said Lord Raine, "why not look about you among girls of your own class? There is no lack of girls, heaven knows," he

said with a sigh, thinking of his own five girls at home; the eldest past twenty-five, and not one of them with a chance of marrying, unless she married a curate.

Raine declined to go home and look about him.

His father then made another suggestion. Would he like to have a couple of his sisters out on a visit? That would keep him from feeling lonely.

"With a *chaperon* and a maid!" Raine exclaimed. "Not if you would pay me five hundred a year. I wouldn't have the maid at any price."

"Of course, if your comfort would not be promoted
_____"

"If you are thinking of my comfort, pray keep *chaperons* and ladies' maids and ladies away from my diggings. Oh, I shall do well enough."

Mrs. Ellacombe had controlled herself till Lord Raine was gone. Then she burst out crying, to Mr. Ellacombe's wonder and distress.

"Mr. Ellacombe," she said, choking down her sobs, "I ain't in the habit of interfering with whom you please to bring to the house, but I've got one thing to ask now. Stop bringing young Mr. Raine home on any account whatever, business or no business. It was a bad day for us all when you brought him to the house."

"How was any one to suppose he was to take a fancy to our little maid?" said the old man with a sigh. "And I was thinking of his immortal soul. And I do look upon him as a brand snatched from the bottomless pit."

"He'll be another sort of a brand I guess, if he's made Mary fall in love with him!" said Mrs. Ellacombe, past all patience.

The old man groaned. "Oh, not that, I hope and pray. It couldn't be, Betsey. 'Twould never do!"

"As if you need tell me that! But I wouldn't be sure. A young maid feels flattered like, when a gentleman comes asking her to marry him."

The old man could only groan and shake his head. "I only thought of his immortal soul," he murmured.

"S—sh!" said Mrs. Ellacombe.

Mary was in the room looking from one to the other. "Is anything the matter, mother?" she asked.

"Nothing to signify," Mrs. Ellacombe answered. She considered for an instant whether she should tell her what Lord Raine's errand had been.

"Wasn't his lordship here just now?" said Mary. She had come in to get the lamp and fill it with oil, and as she spoke her back was to her mother, but Mrs. Ellacombe could see that as she mentioned Lord Raine's name her very neck reddened, betraying the blush that was on her cheek.

"Yes," she said, "his lordship was here just now, and I hope and pray it's for the last time. Young Mr. Raine's been telling up some foolishness about having a fancy for you, and his lordship called in to say he wouldn't hear of such a thing on any account whatever."

Mary turned round and looked at her mother. "I hope you said I wouldn't be the one to go pushing myself where I wasn't wanted."

"I as good as said that. And what's more, I told him straight out that my girl shouldn't marry any drunkard, reformed or not. It was a time to speak plain, and with the Lord's help I spoke plain. And don't be flustered now, Mary."

Mary took up the lamp and opened the door.

"It is no more than what I expected " she said, as she left the room.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE MAJOR PLOTS.

ONE day late in October the Major was riding towards Munro county court-house on business connected with state politics, when a smart shower of rain came on, and he heard a peal of thunder. A quarter of a mile beyond was old Flippoto's mill, and beyond that for some miles an almost continuous stretch of wood. Now the Major had no wish to be caught in a thunder-storm in the midst of the wood, so he touched up his horse and trotted on till he reached the mill, where he stopped. The miller was sitting in the doorway of his house, and rose as soon as he saw the Major, who, after the usual salutations, dismounted and went indoors. There he sat and gossiped with the miller while the thunder rolled and the rain fell in torrents. The miller informed him that very shortly there was to be a family gathering to hear the "funerals preached" of various relatives, Pringles and Flippotos, who had died within the last ten years. Besides various younger Pringles and Flippotos, there were Baldy Pringle, and cousin Pleasant Flippoto; and Siberia his wife, who had only

been dead a couple of months. They were Baptists, so of course one of their ministers must "preach their funerals." The miller had no use for Baptists himself, but of course he must go with the family—and they expected quite a "big time." They wanted to have a preaching for each of the deceased, but the minister said that as there was a sermon only once a fortnight during the summer, it was impossible to give so many to one family. Other families wanted "funerals preached" for their relations as well.

"I would like mightily," said the miller presently, "to know how they fixed it about that lien."

The Major pricked up his ears. "What lien?"

"I mean the lien Baldy Pringle had on cousin Pleasant's place. Baldy lent Pleasant four hundred dollars on it, and I never heard that it had been paid off. Now, if Siberia didn't fix it when she sold that land, Mat (that's Baldy's son) will come in for the money now."

"And whereabouts was it Pleasant Flippoto used to live?" asked the Major. He thought he had an inkling, but he wanted to make sure.

"Why, whar Englishman Tregellas lives now, to be sure. The house jes' fell to pieces; you would hardly find its place now, except for a big gum-tree that stood right by the house do', if they ain't cut it down."

"Tregellas's place is not so far from here, is it?"

"If you make a bee line it's right close; though if you go by the road it's a long ways round; and rocky. But they say he's improved it right smartly."

"How is he doing?"

"Like other folks, I 'spect. Don't grind much for him. 'Spose he was raised on wheat bread. Told me he never seen corn pone till he come here. Why what kind of a country mout that be whar the folks can't raise corn?" said the miller with good-natured contempt.

The Major explained that the old country did manage to get along, in a crablike, lopsided manner; though it was an undoubted fact that the two staves of life, corn and tobacco, could not be raised in it.

"Ah," said the miller, with a long look at a wooded hillside which he pointed out to the Major, "that hillside never ought to have been his'n."

"But," said the Major, with an effort of memory, "that hillside is yours. Surely I seem to remember——"

"T'other side," said the miller jerking his head, "t'other side of this. When I bought this piece, seemed naturally right I should own t'other side o' the hill, didn't it? Not that it's wuth so much, 'cause thar's more gravel that side. But it's the same hill, see! Seems naturally right one man should own both sides of one hill, don't it, Major?"

The Major laughed, and said it depended on whether he bought both sides.

"I was just studying whether I'd make an offer for it, when I heard that Englishwoman had bought it for her child."

"That's a fact. So she did," said the Major.

"Well," continued Flippoto, "I may be even with him yet. I haven't heard of his owing anybody around,

or running up bills at the sto'; but I know he didn't make much crap. See here, Major"—and he edged his chair closer to the Major's—"heap o' folks has got discouraged and has sold out for less than the improvements cost 'em——"

"More fools they," said the Major sharply. "They should have held on. There are ups and downs in every market."

"Of co'se, we all know that, Major. But if you did have the selling of that hillside, I'd like mightily to know in good time. See?"

"Haven't heard a whisper of any such thing; quite the contrary. I should say they were the sort that had come to stay."

"Ah," said the miller regretfully. "But they mout conclude to move. Heap of 'em has gone back whar they started from."

"Not so many when you count 'em up," said the Major, who was not going to admit a depreciation in the value of his own especial commodity to please anybody.

Noon came, dinner was over, and still the rain came down, with gusts of wind at intervals.

"Mighty apt to hold up at sundown," said the miller, throwing a log on the fire, "but that won't help you any. Too late for Munro co'te-house to-day." The Major reckoned it was so, and took his seat resignedly, and the weather did clear up as Flippoto had predicted.

As the Major rode back to Harmonia in the dusk, he decided that this story of the lien would be worth his while to look into some time. But there were far

weightier matters to engage his attention just then. There was to be an election in November, and he had been on the stump ever since the nomination of the present candidate for Congress. The Major had for years belonged to the ragged brigade of office beggars: he had worked hard at election times, he had had a finger in every barrel; he had helped to place money where it would do most good; and he had made himself professionally acquainted with all the mysteries of tissue-paper and ballot-boxes; he had not been backward in asking favours or seizing chances; and yet Congressmen came and Congressmen went, and not the smallest place had been found for him in the grand army of office-holders. There must be something rotten in the state, he thought, when such fidelity as his went unrewarded. Should he turn scallawag he might get something. A friend of his boyhood had turned scallawag, and had been rewarded by a door-keepership. The friend had written an artless letter to another friend of his youth, and this other had cruelly made the letter public, in which the scallawag, with an enthusiasm which defied orthography, had told how fine a team he drove, and how the Congressmen's wives sent him "bokays" and opera tickets, and how he was petted by everybody, so that he was "a bigger man than old ——." The Major's gorge rose at the idea of having to become a scallawag; nevertheless, to be so faithful and so unrewarded was enough to drive a man to do something desperate.

Still he was hoping. He always did hope for some time before election day, and for a few weeks after; or

until he knew from the newly-elected Congressman that there was absolutely nothing more to give away, and that he had been left out—till next time.

He did not aspire to the highest things ; but among so many clerkships, post offices, vice-consulships, and what not, surely a place might have been found for him. He did not hope for a chief clerkship in the government seed-mixing store, but surely he might have been appointed one of the government assistant-buyers of old seed ; a humble office enough, though not without its refreshments. He was sure that he knew old seed as well as anybody ; but instead of him a cranky wholesale chemist had been appointed, who had so bungled matters, that it had come to the knowledge of the public that fifty thousand dollars' worth of old beet-seed had been purchased and distributed among the confiding citizens in agricultural districts. The Major felt sure he would have known how to mix seed better than that.

Now although the Major had been as active in the canvass as any man could be, had orated himself hoarse, and had swallowed drams of all sorts—generally the meaner sorts—of whiskey, to the endangering of his liver and his brains, nevertheless the candidate for Congress and his favourite henchman had twitted him in a genteel, private way, on his being the shepherd of a flock which mostly refused to be acclimatized. The candidate had expressed his opinion to the Major that it was time Congress should place a limit on the buying of land by aliens in this free and glorious country. Some thousands of aliens, fairly well-to-do in circumstances had spent

their capital in the purchase and improvement of worn-out desolate tracts in various Southern states. Harmonia was by no means the only "little England" that had sprung up since the war. Such communities were to be counted by the dozen—nay, by the hundred. These aliens had had their use. They had helped to give life to regions which were at their last gasp; they had reclaimed and made fruitful the waste places; they had paid taxes into an empty treasury; they had kept alive the civilized custom of cash payments in places where the people in their utter denudation had fallen back upon a pioneer system of barter; small change being usually represented by sun-dried apples and blackberries. These things were undeniable. Nevertheless, as it was right that all things should change, so these things had changed in their aspect. What had been good yesterday, would be bad to-morrow. The continued existence of these alien communities was to be deprecated, now that the country was recovering from its exhaustion, and was more able to help itself. It would be a bad example to the citizens of a "solid South" if a person, or a body of people should be tolerated and protected, merely because they were peaceful and industrious, and helped to enrich the place in which they dwelt. It would make it plain that non-voters were as much entitled to protection as voters: and such a condition of public opinion was not to be endured for a moment. Every man should be bound down to citizenship; to the possession of a vote to give away or to sell; and a law ought therefore to be passed to limit the acquiring of lands by aliens to a certain specified time, after which such

lands should be declared forfeited to the several states in which they lay.

The Major agreed with the candidate. He had been frequently chafed by the attitude taken up by Colonel Haverstock, old Mr. Denning, and Tregellas. He had had formerly—that was before his being installed as chief deputy shepherd to Harmonia—merely a vague dislike to the English, which might have been expressed according to the formula of a pleasant individual, “Dum an Englishman anyway;” but now he was conscious of a special dislike to this special sort of Englishman, to the sort that gloried in being a British subject, and professed unbounded loyalty to the Queen, and unbounded pride in the particular service to which he had belonged, and unbounded faith in his Church. And these, and such as these, brought insular, British, starched notions of right and wrong into what might have been such a happy, easy-going community, that it was becoming a hard matter for a store-keeper to earn his honest bread, or a bar tender his honest whiskey. The stores were ground down so that they dared not sell by any but just weights and measures, and the saloon-keeper talked of pulling up stakes, and going elsewhere; so inveterate had some Englishmen become in their craze for temperance.

The Major was angry when he meditated on these things. Who were these men, that they should live in the only free country on the face of the globe, and continue to despise the inestimable benefit of citizenship, and yet retain influence? The Major on first assuming his pastoral crook, had taken it for granted that each

settler would hasten to enrol himself in the ranks of citizens. As a matter of fact, scarcely one, except among the baser sort, had done so. And some who might have done so had been held back, he felt sure, by the influence of men like the Colonel, the retired Lieutenant, and the old Clergyman.

When the Major on the eve of the coming election "orated" to this little band on the glory of the ever-victorious stars and stripes; on the high privilege which was held out to them; on the desirability, even in a pecuniary point of view, of availing themselves of that privilege; the Colonel smiled gently, and hinted that possibly the Major being an American, could not quite enter into their feelings as loyal British subjects: while Tregellas exclaimed bluntly that if a man changed his nationality after having had the honour of serving the Queen, he deserved to be strung up at the yardarm. Thomas Rosevear, as an old man-of-war's man, was more noisy in shaking his voluntary chain than were his superiors, and, as was to be expected from an unlettered alien, more offensive. Thinking that in his line he had a certain amount of influence, the Major took a great deal of trouble to explain the benefits of citizenship, and reasoned with him on his obstinacy in standing thus in his own light, when the possession of a vote might mean dollars. There were so many ways, direct and indirect, by which a channel might be made for the almighty dollar to roll itself sweetly into his pocket. Why not qualify in time for the next presidential election?

But Thomas, pigheaded as became a Cornishman,

instead of showing gratitude for the Major's attention to his interests, took it ill that he should be advised to change his nationality, and spoke his mind as man to man, and not as man to Major.

"Look 'ee here, my lad," he said, straightening up his back, which was stiff from constant digging, "you'd better stow that. A man that's been disrated might listen to that discourse, but not an old man-o'-war's man like I be, with a pension. Do 'ee think I am going to turn Judas Iscariot at my time of life?"

And the old man went back to his work with various disconnected detonating references to ropes' ends, majors that were not majors, sons of guns, and sea-cooks.

As soon as the election was over, the Major set himself to work seriously to discover what truth there might be in the miller's story of the lien. If there were anything in it, the result would certainly be a few honest dollars in his own pocket and out of Tregellas's. He searched the records of Robison county without success, and began to think that the money transaction had been without legal formality. But on the succeeding court-day at Munro court-house, his special business being done, he bethought himself of taking a look at the records; and there he found the registry of the lien, dated twelve years back. The amount was four hundred dollars.

Now the property in question, as Tregellas had bought it, had been registered by Mistress Siberia Flippoto in the clerk's office at Robison court-house. But to answer the question of how the lien came to be registered in

Munro county, the Major had to search farther and examine the county survey. Then it appeared that the boundary line of Robison and Munro counties ran through Pleasant Flippoto's land; that the house with an acre or two of woodland was in Munro county, while the rest of the two hundred and odd acres were in Robison county.

Having ascertained this, the next step was to find Baldy Pringle's surviving son, Mat. He was said to be somewhere "way up yonder," at the head of Bald Eagle mountain; and after a long and baffling search, rendered still more difficult by the neighbourly unwillingness to indicate the way to Mat's private dwelling to a man who wore store clothes, and had saddlebags such as the sheriff and the taxgatherer and the assessor carried—the Major found Mat Pringle—a prey to *delirium tremens*.

Judy Jane, with her baby and the children, were encamped in a rough shed behind the unchinked windowless log cabin, warming themselves by a fire built outside; while Mat, barricaded in the cabin, was making the air hideous with howls and shrieks.

The Major had some trouble in making Mrs. Pringle understand his errand. She at first took him for the sheriff, and insisted with weak iteration that her husband had never done anything to go to jail for. When at length the Major had succeeded in persuading her that he was not an officer of the law, and that his sole object was to put her husband in the way of getting a sum of money, she declared that it was no good to Mat to have money. He drank every cent he could get, and she had been obliged to pay the county-tax herself.

that year out of her chicken money. If anybody wanted to have Mat told about money, she reckoned he would have to tell him himself.

As the Major looked round a happy thought occurred to him. A mountain cabin rarely has a comfortable look; yet there are degrees, even in discomfort, and this cabin appeared to him the most miserable he had ever seen. There was no sign of attempt at a garden; a few dead stalks of roasting ear corn with dried-up bean-pods hanging from them, was all that denoted cultivation in the vicinity of the cabin.

He gathered up the reins as if about to start, then he said :—

“Wouldn’t you like a good home?”

“I would that,” the woman replied with ironical emphasis.

“A home with window sashes, and porches, and every kind of vine running over the doors, and shade trees in the yard, and a big garden with a tight fence and a chicken-house?”

Judy Jane regarded him with lack-lustre eyes. “You better say a sparrowgrass bed an’ a peach orchard to oncet.”

The Major slapped his leg. “Fact, madam. Thank you for reminding me. There is a sparrowgrass bed, *and* a peach orchard. For the matter of that, there is an apple orchard too and a chestnut grove. All young, of course, but so much the better for you and your children. All tame fruit too, none of your wild peaches, hard as bullets. Whoppers as big as my fist!” And he held up his fist, which was a big one.

The woman muttered "Oh, pshaw," and turned her head, but the Major detected a faint smile on her face.

"Well, there it is, for you to pick up. Take it or leave it, madam, and good day to you."

"That will fetch her, sure," said the Major to himself as he rode away: and so it did.

A week later, Mat Pringle, shaky yet from his attack, with his gun in his hand, his shot belt slung round him, and a gourd of powder in his pocket, slouched into the Major's office. As soon as she could venture, his wife had told him of the stranger's message, and though he had at first declared that she was trying to fool him, her persistence, backed by the Major's business card had so far prevailed, that he had taken the trouble to tramp all the way from Bald Eagle to the Major's office.

The interview was protracted, and bid fair at one moment to become stormy; as was to be expected when one man wanted to get something for nothing, and the other man was determined to have his *quid pro quo*. Mat Pringle's ideas were considerably modified before he got into the street again; nor did he get there before he had signed an agreement to pay to Major Forepaw the sum of two hundred dollars, *i.e.* half the principal; together with half the interest, precise amount not specified, on recovery of the lien on the property of Mistress Siberia Flippoto, now in the possession of the Englishman Tregellas.

The Major had made it his business before this, to go to Jonesville, and make confidential inquiries of the

cashier of the bank, as to the amount of Tregellas's account. The cashier had given the amount—confidentially—as exactly four hundred and fifty dollars.

When Mat Pringle so far disclosed the working of his mind as to make it plain to the Major that he expected to take over Siberia Flippoto's whilom property in satisfaction of the lien, the Major was at no pains to undeceive him. He only impressed upon him the fact that he could do nothing without professional assistance ; and that two hundred dollars with half the accumulated interest in payment of that assistance, was dirt cheap.

"S'pose he don't want to 'git?'" Mat had asked, fingering at his gun.

What *he* wanted was not the matter in hand, the Major had answered. But he would not be likely to "git" because of Mat's wanting to step in. "He is a good shot, and his hand never shakes as yours does," added the Major.

Mat signed his name at the bottom of the agreement, and went back to his eyrie at Bald Eagle, feeling as if he had sold himself to the devil, but not caring enough to be afraid.

CHAPTER IX.

THE PROMISED LAND.

IT was late in the afternoon of one of the last days of Indian summer, that Judy Jane and her husband stood on the spot where Pleasant Flippoto's house had been. They had been staying at the mill for convenience in attending the funeral sermons which had been preached in due course at the Baptist church five miles off, for the deceased Pleasant and his wife, and her baby and Baldy Pringle and the various infant Pringles, most of them belonging to Judy Jane. The family had wished to have separate sermons preached for each of these deceased relatives, but the Baptist preacher had persuaded them that such a course was impossible seeing that there was only preaching twice a month during the summer; the Pringles and the Flippotos could not stop the way for other people's funeral sermons for an indefinite number of Sundays. So the sermons were made to commemorate one family a piece, and none were exalted more than the other among the Church members.

Being so near, both Mat and his wife had felt curious

to see again the place which had once belonged to their far-away cousin; the place which might possibly be theirs, if things were managed as cousin Flippoto said they ought to be.

It was as the miller had told them, before they set out. There was nothing left to mark the spot except the gum-tree. It still held its crimson leaves, while the other deciduous trees were nearly denuded, and showed only pale greys and browns against the clumps of cedar and white pine which had grown up where Pleasant Flippoto had made a clearing when first he took possession of the tract some thirty years ago.

Judy Jane wore a faded calico gown and a faded sun bonnet. Half covered by a shawl which Mrs. Flippoto had lent her, a young baby lay asleep in her arms. Mat had his gun; and a squirrel, a rabbit, and a red-headed woodpecker, which he carried slung together over his shoulder, were evidence that he had got over his fit of the "trembles" for this time at least.

Judy Jane looked at the gum-tree and at the sky where the sun was setting. Then, without hesitation, she walked due west, towards a little flat-topped knoll between the bottom land and the higher hills, where there was a clump of persimmon trees and a tall pine which had been left undisturbed. The knoll was enclosed by a rough fence in good condition.

"I wanted to see whether I could find the burying ground," she said, in explanation to Mat, who followed her.

"Siberia didn't have much luck raising children," she remarked when she stood on top of the knoll.

There were three little mounds made by placing stones together, and one by itself about the length of a grown person. The grown person was Maria Jane, an old aunt of Pleasant's, who had died not long after Pleasant went to live there. But not even Judy Jane could remember the names of the little ones who lay beneath these lowly grass-grown mounds: only that they were Cousin Siberia's babies.

"They've left it just like it was," she said. "Some folks would as soon ploughed over it as not."

"Shoo!" said Mat. "What's that piece, that they should want to plough it up? 'Twouldn't grow ter-backer."

"That's so," she acquiesced.

"Now," said he, glancing briefly round, "if you want to see that house the Major was telling of, you better push on, else it'll be dark befo' we git thar."

A half a mile of forest path skirting the foot of a hill brought them in front of the cottage; as pretty a nest, with its garden, its young orchards and its chestnut grove surrounding it, as the heart of woman could desire. Judy Jane leaned against the fence, and gazed at it in a silent ecstasy of longing.

"Glass windys an' tight do's, an' po'ches!" she said at last.—"An' thar's the sparrowgrass bed: so that man didn't deceive me!—Why, Mat, Ma's home warn't a circum—stance to this."

"Wonder how high 'twould sell?" said Mat.

Judy Jane caught her breath. "Oh, should you want to sell it?"

Mat gave a snort of contempt. "Think I'd live in a

house chinked up as tight as that house? No, *ma'am*! Why, in they tight houses folks is 'bleeged to open the windys to let in the a'r."

"I believe I'd have better luck raising my babies if we did live in a tight house," said his wife with a sigh.

"Shoo! Gran'pa Pringle allays allowed that tight houses wuz mighty onhealthy. You don't have luck raisin' the chillen 'cause you dunno how."

Judy Jane sighed, but made no reply. As she turned slowly away a lady came down the path, carrying a basket with chestnuts in it and leading a beautiful little boy dressed in pale blue and white. She was singing sweetly as she came, and the child joined in with all the strength of his high treble pipe. As soon as she saw the strangers she stopped and bade them good evening, and asked them what they wanted.

Judy Jane answered that they had only stopped to look at the house, and was moving onwards, her husband following, when the baby beneath her shawl stirred and whimpered.

"Oh," cried Edith—for it was she—"have you a little baby there? May I see it?"

What woman can resist showing her baby? Judy Jane uncovered the child's face, and Edith beheld a poor little ill-nourished, feeble creature, that it made her heart ache to look at. "You have walked a long way, for you look tired; and I dare say your baby is tired too," she said. "Come in, and I will give you some supper. Will you not come too?" she said to Mat.

"We better be pushing on," said Mat gruffly. But Judy Jane was curious and wanted to see the inside of

the house. "I'd like a drink o' water, and to rest me a minute," she said, looking at Mat.

He replied gruffly, "All right. Don't be long about it," and went a little way into the woods where the woodpeckers were at work high up in the chestnut trees. Edith took the stranger into her little parlour, made her sit by the fire, and placed food before her. She unwound the baby from its wrappings and prepared milk for it. While she was doing this Judy Jane's eyes wandered round in a half-dazed way, taking in the details of furnishing and decoration;—the room which Edith's acquaintance thought so plain, was to Judy Jane the highest expression of luxury.

"Seems like I'd seen you somewhar'," she said, looking at last at Edith. Edith said she too thought she must have seen her before.

"I'm Mis' Pringle," said Judy Jane. "We used to live 'way down yonder below Deercreek, whar' thar' wuz a whisky shanty."

Then Edith remembered. She had not been married long, she reminded Judy Jane, when she and her husband had passed by their house, riding to Harmonia. Since then this little house had been built, and she had had her baby, and her husband had cleared land and planted some hundreds of fruit trees of all kinds, besides laying out a garden.

"It is a great change, is it not?" she said with a happy laugh. "And you? This is a new baby, I see. The other must be quite big by this time."

"It died," said Judy Jane laconically.

Edith started. "Oh, poor thing!" she cried with

ready sympathy. But though the tears stood in her eyes, her guest's were dry.

"Yes," she repeated, "it died. An'the one befo' that one died. An'this one don't seem to thrive nohow. He cries so. I spent my last dollar to get 'Painkiller' for him; catnip tea don't do him one par—ticle o' good. An' I don't see as 'Painkiller' helps him much. They said at the sto' it would help him mightily, but it don't. He ought to be heavier at six weeks old, don't you think?"

Edith told her gently that she thought the child would be better for milk.

Judy Jane sighed. The cow was gone, she said; taken for taxes. That was last year. She didn't see how she was ever to get another. Times were mighty hard, and she supposed she and the children must just "rastle" as best they could. "But," she said, "you seem to have had luck, so far."

"Yes, I have been fortunate," said Edith softly.

Judy Jane looked round the room again and wondered at the things she saw. There were books, books everywhere; what could folks want with so many? And there were big tables and little tables, and chairs of all sorts, and a big soft rug in front of the fire, and pictures on the walls. "I never see a woman fixed up so well as you," she said. She felt a little pang of envy, mixed with some slight compunction at the thought that Mat was going to sell this pleasant, comfortable place when he got it; and that these folks would have had all the trouble of "fixing up" to no avail.

Edith, meanwhile, had brought out some little warm garments which her boy had long outgrown, and had

fitted them on to the sickly baby. Judy Jane, who had looked on with an appearance of interest, said as if recollecting herself:—

“I don’t want ter deprive you of yer baby’s things. You mout want ’em, you know.”

Edith said, laughing, that the baby was welcome to them. Perhaps he would be more healthy for having warmer clothes than what he had been wearing, now that the weather was getting cold.

“I’m ’bleeged to you. I hain’t got no money to pay,” said Judy Jane reluctantly.

But Edith repeated that she was welcome; and the woman rose, saying her husband would be angry if she stayed longer.

She walked slowly towards the place where her husband was waiting for her. Edith, watching her as she went, pitied her and longed to do something—she knew not what—to make her less unhappy. She turned to her boy and clasped him in her arms. “Ah, as long as I have my two Harrys!”—she cried, kissing him again and again,—“as long as I have them, could I help being happy!—”

Judy Jane went on with her mind full of what she had seen. Her baby, soothed by the milk and the unaccustomed warmth of clothing, had fallen asleep, and seemed already to lie heavier in her arms.

“That woman looked like if she’d never had a hard word said to her in her life,” she thought. “I shouldn’t wonder if she’d take it mighty hard to have to leave her home.” Mat, seeing her, called to her to hurry up.

“Why, you’ve been making a trade,” he exclaimed,

when he saw the difference in the baby's dress. "You've bin smart for once in yer life, I de—clar."

"That woman give 'em to me," said Judy Jane in explanation. "She heard the child cough, an' she jes' went to her bu—ro an' tuk out the coat an' skeert, an' putt 'em on him jes' so. I didn't make no trade, because I hadn't anything *tu* trade."

The incidents of the walk were quite an exciting topic of conversation that night, between Judy Jane and Mrs. Flippoto on one side of the capacious chimney, and Mat Pringle and the miller on the other.

"That coat must ha' cost a heap when 'twas new," said Mrs. Flippoto as she fingered the soft wool.

"An' jes' you feel the undercoat," said Judy Jane. "Pink flannel," she whispered.

"Lor', so 'tis," said Mrs. Flippoto, peeping. "This ain't no or'nary goods, I tell you. You'd never get this fur less'n a dollar a yard. Never in the world."

There was a pause. To Judy Jane's mind a dollar a yard for anything, represented the *ne plus ultra* of feminine extravagance.

"I never did see a woman with so many fixments," she said at length. "I shouldn't wonder if she took it mighty hard to have to leave her home."

Mrs. Flippoto assented. "I shouldn't wonder. Wal, it's jes' luck, you know; that's what it is. Mout happen to you or me. Not that I've anything to say against her," she added with a wish to be just, even to a strange woman. "They say she helped nuss a good many of those folks what were down sick in the summer: an' I seen her myself carrying along baskets of victuals for 'em."

"Yes? folks are that a-way, you know."

"That's so. Comes easy to be helpin' an' givin' away. Comes jes' as easy as eating, I reckon."

"The Major hadn't told any lie about the orchards," said Mat. "They wuz all thar. *An'* the chestnut grove!"

They all had a comfortable laugh over the absurdity of a man planting chestnut trees. And then when the laugh had died out, the miller excited it afresh by telling how the Englishman had told everybody he had got improved Euro—pi—an sorts sent all the way from Washington, and that the fruit of the improved sorts were three times as big as the chestnuts of this country: which as the miller said, was just as if anybody were to tell him that squirrels in the old country grew to be as big as 'coons.

"Somebody was saying," quoth Mrs. Flippoto, "that he'd set out mighty nigh upon a thousand trees."

"Lor'!" Judy Jane whispered, "'pears to me I'd fight hard befo' I git out of a home like that. Wouldn't you, cousin?"

Mrs. Flippoto shook her head, and murmured something about luck.

The miller, hearing the observation addressed to his wife, put in his word dogmatically. "When the law's agin 'em, an' they've got no money, 'tain't one par—ticle of use their fighting."

Judy Jane hesitated. She felt chary of contradicting a man in his own house; besides which, Cousin Flippoto was kin to the Pringles on his mother's side, and none of that family liked to be contradicted.

"They say the miller's got the key of every man's house," she said in a propitiatory tone, "so I s'pose you ought to know how 'tis, cousin. But—going by looks—that's what I go by mostly—I should say that English-woman's never been withouten a dollar whenever she's wanted one."

Mrs. Flippoto nodded. "They *du* say her husband thinks all the world of her."

"Pshaw!" interrupted the miller. "Hush yer foolishness! Didn't I tell yer, he made no crap? An' has spent a lot on improvements, an' bin makin' a road from his place spang down here?—Makin' a road!—Wal!—If he's spent his money, he's spent it. An' if he's spent it, he hasn't got it."

"It's gone into somebody's pocket, you bet it has," laughed Mat.

Judy Jane rubbed her baby's toes silently for a minute. Then she ventured to say to Mrs. Flippoto:—

"I s'pose if they had the money to pay, they'd pay it an' keep the place."

"If!—Oh, yes, I des say. If!—" said the miller with a touch of sarcasm. "But when folks pay out cash for everything, an' go to making every kind of improvement, an' no cash comes in, they're bound to run low at last. If the water's shut off, wheel won't turn, eh?—Why, lemmesee, Tregellas has paid me—I wouldn't like to say how many hundred dollars for plank and what not, fust an' last."

"Why, cousin, you'll be wanting to buy that place yo'self," said Judy Jane.

"Not I. Got no use for't. Too fur off."

"I reckon you've made a fortin' by this time, out of all those outlandish folks."

The miller was pleased at the implied compliment, but did his best to look dissatisfied. "'Tis not all profit, Judy Jane, not by a long chalk. It comes in and it's paid out, an' it's mighty little stays in my pocket at the end o' the year. Jes' got to scuffle like other folks."

Nevertheless, it was clear to the miller, and clear to the rest of the family, that Baldy Pringle being translated to another sphere, and the only surviving son not being given to accumulate, on Mr. Flippoto the mantle of Baldy's greatness must descend. There was a certain fitness of things apparent here, for Baldy Pringle had been a miller in his active days. Old man Flippoto had never had the least hesitation in saying that Mat's wife was a "poor excuse." But Judy Jane's deferential manner, and her appreciation of his greatness, so won upon him that when the Pringles took their leave next morning, he presented Judy with a stunted heifer calf, whose mother had come to an untimely end by falling down a gully. Judy Jane received the gift with overflowing gratitude. Mat, who was but half pleased, because it would fall to his lot to drive the animal home, rebuked his wife for saying so overmuch. "Looked like if you'd never owned a cow in your life," he said. "Blamed if I think 'tis wuth driving home!"

"Oh, Mat, it is. It will be a cow some day, an' the chillen 'll have milk. That Englishwoman's child, he's seal fat, an' cheeks like apples, an' stan's jes' as straight on his legs!—an' he gets all the sweet milk he wants."

"I'm sure," said the poor woman, beginning to whimper, "I never did think to own a cow again. I didn't know how I wuz to get one."

Mat bade her stop that if she wanted his company home. She obeyed, and they walked the long miles in silence. But for many days after, Judy Jane would shut her eyes as she sat by her fire, and recall the pleasant room and the sweet smile of the Englishwoman, and the beauty of the little English child; and wonder in her dull slow way how she was likely to feel when she was turned out of her pretty home, and whether she would take her fix—ments along, or sell them.

CHAPTER X.

TROUBLES.

MAJOR FOREPAW had not been careful to keep the matter of the lien a secret any longer than the time necessary for him to arrange with Mat Pringle as to the payment he was to receive for his services in the recovery of the four hundred dollars; so that it was already a matter of gossip at the whisky saloon which the Major patronised, that a lien had been discovered on Tregellas's land, and that he had not the wherewithal to pay, and would probably be sold up. The gossip spread from the saloon to the grocery store opposite, and was the principal tidbit of news retailed by the postmaster for nearly a week, with the addition that the Major was going to buy the place himself and speculate on the next rise.

Late one afternoon, Tregellas entered the grocery and asked for his mail. The postmaster gave him a bundle of English papers; then remarking that there was something else, he brought out the Major's letter and handed it separately to Tregellas, who took it with apparent unconcern.

"That's from the Major, I believe, sir," said the postmaster.

"The Major!" said Tregellas.

He stood in the doorway as he tore open the letter, wondering what the Major could have to write to him about. The postmaster would have been by his side, so anxious was he to see how the Englishman would take the communication which he felt certain to be within the envelope; but a party of negro women came in at that instant, and he dared not turn his back, as there would certainly be two or three pilferers among them.

Tregellas read the letter through once and audibly pronounced it a barefaced swindle. It was a curt notification that a lien for four hundred dollars (bearing interest at the rate of six per centum per annum) existed on the property formerly in the possession of Mrs. Siberia Flippoto; that the heirs of Mr. Baldy Pringle, deceased, had placed the matter in the Major's hands, and that Mr. Tregellas's prompt attention to the settlement of the claim was requested. On the margin was noted the date of the lien some twelve years back.

The postmaster looked regretfully at the broad back of the Englishman as it darkened his shop door. Another minute, and the afternoon sun streamed in and the man was gone.

"Well," thought the postmaster, "I'd ha' liked to see how he took it. I hope he will be able to scare the money up. I don't believe in being down on a man when he's in a hard place. The Major might come to want accommodation himself some day, for all he's

so smart." And then he turned his attention to his dusky customers.

Meanwhile Tregellas, full of wrath and consternation, rushed down the street to Dr. Bontecoe's surgery, where he found not only the doctor but Trelease. "Look here," he cried, not stopping to shake hands, "can you tell me the meaning of this? Is it a plant, or what?"

Dr. Bontecoe read the letter, Trelease looking over his shoulder. "I fear it is true," said the doctor; who like every one else in Harmonia had heard the rumour.

"But," said Tregellas, "if there was one thing in the world I was more certain of than another, it was that there was no encumbrance on my place when I bought it. I paid this man Forepaw extra to make sure about it, because I had heard stories of one or two men who had been let in. He said 'to the best of his knowledge and belief' there was no such thing as a lien: and I said, 'never mind your belief. Look and see.' And I have it down in his bill, 'To searching records in the clerk's office at Robison County Court-house, two dollars.'"

"He must be an awful fraud," said the doctor.

"It is a most inconceivable thing," said Trelease.

"Well," said Tregellas, who had taken up the letter again, "if this thing is true, the interest for so many years will double it."

Trelease suggested that perhaps it would be well to show the Major's letter to a lawyer.

"Lord bless you," said Tregellas, "they are all thieves and rogues together. I'll go and see that man Forepaw though, and hear what he has to say."

He went out, the doctor calling after him to come back and let them know the result.

The Major was standing on the doorstep of his office. "Evenin', captain," said he pleasantly, as Tregellas came up.

"Did you write this?" said Tregellas, handing him the letter.

The Major took it, glanced at it and handed it back again. "I did, sir."

"You did?"

"Certainly I did."

"And you mean to tell me that a lien for four hundred dollars is on the place which I bought believing it to be unencumbered?"

"Unfortunately that would appear to be the case."

"But look here, Major," said Tregellas, "didn't you search the records, and didn't you tell me there was no such thing as a lien? Do you suppose I'd have bought the place had I known of any lien being on it?"

"I cannot say as to that, cap'n. I never advised your buying the place."

This was true. "Did you search the records in Robison Court-house or not?" Tregellas insisted.

"In Robison Court-house, certainly. But this lien was recorded in Munro."

"Then it's a swindle! You know my place is in Robison county."

"All except three or four acres," said the Major calmly.

"And when did you find that out? Because you never told me," said Tregellas with some heat. "I'll swear there is no mention of it in my deed."

"It is a fact, nevertheless. As to the time when it came to my knowledge, why, cap'n, you must excuse me."

"Well," Tregellas began, "unless this thing is a gross swindle——"

"Ah," interrupted the Major, "you won't find it much of a swindle, sir, not much. It's about as hard a fact as any I know of."

"Then there has been gross negligence on your part," Tregellas retorted. "I paid you to look after my interests, and by Jove!—this is how you have looked after them."

"Wal, what are you going to do about it?" said the Major.

The insolence of the speech, and the insolence of the Major's manner, were such, that Tregellas, to avoid knocking him down, turned his back on him and walked back to the surgery.

"Was he uncivil?" Trelease asked.

"Uncivil! He was insolent. Coolly asked me what I was going to do about it."

The doctor and the curate both shook their heads at this, and agreed that it looked bad. They advised Tregellas to apply to some lawyer without delay, but he stoutly refused to do so.

"I'm not going to pay with my eyes shut, of course," he said. "I shall look into this thing myself and find out what there is to find out; and if I must pay, I must. What good would a lawyer do? See what has come of my having trusted this fellow Forepaw. No more lawyers for me, thank you. Besides—to tell the truth,

I couldn't afford to pay a lawyer. You know I have spent a good deal of money on my place—that is, a good deal for me. I did it thinking it would pay some day. And of course I've made nothing this year, any more than any one else has. And we gave all we could afford and more, to help some of the people who would not go to the hospital."

The doctor sat still, making marks with a pencil on a sheet of paper. He was cogitating how far he could afford to help Tregellas. He was a poor man, but he felt very certain that he could not let such an one as Harry Tregellas go under for want of a helping hand. Trelease had had it on his lips once or twice since Tregellas's re-entrance, to say to his friend that his purse was open to its utmost limit, such as it was; but he was too shy to say this before a third person.

After a few moments of moody silence, Tregellas rose.

"Look here, Tregellas," said Dr. Bontecoe, "if you want help to pull through this, we'll help you."

Tregellas thanked him warmly, but added, "If I have to pay, I must pay, and that will be the end of it. For myself it wouldn't matter so much, — But I dare say we shall pull through somehow. Good-night."

He went out, pulling his hat over his eyes. He had not walked a dozen yards before Trelease caught up with him and put his hand through his arm.

"Old fellow," he began, "I didn't want to say anything before Bontecoe because it's nobody's business but yours and mine, but—I can lend you the money for as long as you like, without the slightest inconvenience. I am only a bachelor, you see, and—and—we are old

friends—" Harry wrung his hand and thanked him, but declared he could not take his friend's money, when he did not know if he should ever be able to repay it. At last to satisfy Trelease's entreaties to be allowed to help him, Tregellas went so far as to promise that if he found he could not get along without, he would borrow from his friend.

And now to tell his wife ! It had been hard for him to tell her when his poor harvest had been gathered in, that she must be more careful than ever, that she must wear her old clothes, and buy no toys for the child ; and deny herself the pleasure of the pretty Christmas gifts she had been planning for Aunt Phœbe and her old man, and Eliza and Thomas. How much harder would it be to tell her that the money they had would hardly do more than pay half this claim, and they would have very little left to live on till next harvest.

When supper was over and they were seated by the fireside, Tregellas pulled the Major's letter out of his pocket. " You would have to know sooner or later," he said. " The long and short of it is we're nearly ruined, and we may thank that fellow Forepaw for it."

Edith read the letter. " Harry," she cried, " it is a swindle. It must be a swindle."

" Trelease and Bontecoe don't think it a swindle," he said. " They advise my applying to a lawyer. But I could see well enough that they thought I should have to pay up, indeed they both offered to lend me the money." And then he told her of his interview with the Major.

" Major Forepaw must be a very wicked man !" cried Edith.

"Offensive he can be, most certainly; I had no idea he could be so offensive in his manner. But—I don't know as to his being wicked. If this lien does exist, and the business of recovering the money has been put in his hands,—why—it is part of his business to collect debts. It is his carelessness which riles me."

"But—when you told him to make sure that there was no lien!—"

Then Harry had to explain that the dividing line of Munro and Robison counties ran through the property, and that the lien had been recorded in Munro county, while the Major had only searched the records in Robison county.

Edith declared she could not believe that the Major did not know that the property was situated partly in one county and partly in another.

It was possible, Harry thought, in a country where the generality of lawyers, doctors, and surveyors, learnt their business as they went, making their clients so many vile bodies for experiment. But however it might be the result was equally disastrous.

The next day Tregellas set out for Munro Court-house, thirty miles off. He told the county clerk what his errand was, but that functionary seemed to know all about it before Tregellas had had time to tell him, and he opened the record book at the exact page where the lien was recorded. When Tregellas had examined the record, the county clerk became confidentially inquisitive, and asked whether he thought of moving. Tregellas replied stiffly that he had no such thought.

The county clerk became thoughtful. The Major

had told him that the man on whose property this lien was, would find himself in a tight place, and would have to sell whether or no; and that he—the Major—thought of buying the property and keeping it till there should be another “boom” in real estate.

“I was told you’d improved your place a good deal,” said the county clerk.

Tregellas replied that he had.

“You don’t believe in pulling up stakes every once in a while?” queried the county clerk.

“No, indeed,” said Tregellas.

Then the county clerk became yet more confidentially inquisitive. He might want to move mightn’t he?

Tregellas declared he had not the slightest intention of moving.

“Well,” said the county clerk, “See here, I was thinking of investing in that neighbourhood, if there was anything worth while in the market. Now if you did conclude to move, I’d give a fair price for your place as times go.”

“And what might that be?” Tregellas asked.

“Well, I wouldn’t mind saying twelve hundred, cash down, mind.”

“Ah, that is about half what the improvements alone have cost me,” said Tregellas. “Good-day to you.”

The county clerk followed him out. “Real estate is going very low just now, I shouldn’t be justified in offering more; I really should not.—Well, say twelve hundred and fifty. Cash down?”

“Not for four times twelve hundred and fifty,” said Tregellas as he rode off. The county clerk went back to

his office, thinking that the Englishman must be smarter than the Major gave him credit for; and must have put some of his eggs in another basket.

Next morning Edith told her husband that she was going to Harmonia, to ask Major Forepaw to find a purchaser, if possible, for the baby's hillside. "It seems like robbing the darling," she said, "but there is no help for it." Tregellas said she would do well to sell it if a purchaser could be found: if for no other reason than that he did not see where the money was to come from to pay the taxes on it. He did not like her going alone to the Major's office, and wished to accompany her. But she refused to allow him.

"You feel irritated with the man, and no wonder," she said. "And as for me, I simply hate him, with his ridiculous paste diamond and his flourishing airs and his chewing. But I can hide my feelings when I try, and you can't. If you go with me, you will make me feel nervous. No, I won't have Eliza either. She would think it too dreadful that I should want to sell the baby's hillside, and she might begin to cry. I will take Aunt Phœbe. She is too stupid to understand, and if she does understand, she will not care."

The Major was not surprised to see Mrs. Tregellas, though he made a pretence of it. He quite expected that the stretch of rough land which Mrs. Tregellas had bought would be in the market before long. He was extremely civil, and as he placed a chair asked, with an appearance of deep interest, what he could do for her. Edith told her business in very few words. The Major

who had seated himself opposite her drew a spittoon to his side and appeared to meditate profoundly, while Mrs. Tregellas sat awaiting his pleasure with secret disgust but with a perfectly impassible face.

"There could hardly be a worse moment to sell than the present, madam," he said at length.

Edith was prepared to hear this, so she said "Indeed!" and waited.

"The fact is"—the Major made a gesture with both hands as if he must be candid though he should die for it—"the fact is, madam, the depreciation in real estate at the present moment is absolutely without a parallel in my experience."

"Is it really as bad as that?" Edith asked. She was prepared for a certain amount of depreciation of the wares she had to sell. She took it for granted that, should she wish to buy at any time, say after breakfast to-morrow morning, the Major would inform her that the market had shown an upward tendency during the night, and that there was now a "boom" in Harmonia real estate.

"I suppose that the market may improve later on," she said.

"Fact is, madam, there is nothing doing in real estate now, nothing whatever."

"I am sorry for it," said Edith, rising. "Excuse my troubling you."

The Major rose. "Of course, I would go out of my way to accommodate a lady. If you really wish to sell that piece—"

"Yes, I wish to sell it," said Edith, calmly. "I bought

it from you for two hundred and fifty dollars. It was a whim of mine."

"Exactly so," the Major nodded. "Two hundred and fifty, eh? Doubtless I have a memorandum of the sale, but I take your word for it. Two hundred and fifty! Why, there must have been a boom then, sure enough. Times have altered mightily since then, madam. You would not get anything like that for it now."

"That is unfortunate," said Edith. "I will wish you good morning."

The Major followed her down stairs. "To accommodate a lady, I am always ready to go out of my way. I'll give you a hundred and twenty-five dollars, cash down. Cash down," he repeated as she went on without making a reply. "Simply to accommodate a lady. I've got no use for a piece that's grown up in ivy, you understand. It's just to oblige a lady."

"You offer me a dollar and a quarter the acre?" said Edith, who had reached the bottom of the stairs. "It strikes me as rather low, Major."

"It's more than it would bring if you put it up to auction," cried the Major. "You may take my word for that, madam. Put it up to auction to-morrow, and I doubt if you get more than eighty dollars for it."

"I don't think I will put it up to auction," said Edith. "I will wait."

The Major handed her into her buggy and old Phœbe climbed in after her. "Yes, better wait; much better. It might bring in pretty near what you paid for it in—say two or three years from now. If you don't care to

wait so long as that, just drop me a line, madam, and I'll give the matter my very best attention."

"Thanks." Edith bowed her head and drove off slowly, with a calm exterior, but with every nerve tingling with indignation. She resolved that she would not sell that hillside at the price the Major offered; no matter what straits she might find herself in; she thought she would rather make dresses for all the negro women in the neighbourhood than sell that kalmia patch.

While considering how she might best effect her object without making any great noise about it, she became aware that Aunt Phœbe was talking.

"Yes. I thought he favoured he daddy. Dat de way he daddy set an' talk. He did allays talk so big! Yes, done remember him good now. We—ll! He daddy dead an' gone, an' won't sell no mo' we alls' chillen."

Edith asked what she was talking about.

"Huh! My Miss Sue wouldn't set down by an ole niggah-trader, no, *ma'am*. My Miss Sue wouldn't let any po' white trash han' her no cheer, not if 'twas de las' cheer in de worl'. She mighty peticler was my Miss Sue."

"Major Forepaw is a lawyer, not a nigger-trader," said Edith. "I don't think I should like to sit down by a nigger-trader any more than your Miss Sue would."

"Huh! You ain't raise here, Miss Edith, but I knows all about hit. I tell you dat man daddy wuz nothin' but an ole niggah-trader. An' he useter carry his son along wid him when he was half grown. Mebbe I seen him de onliest time I seen de ole man. Dat was

after de ole miss died, my Miss Sue ma. You see dey 'vided everythin' up 'tween Miss Sue an' her brother, hosses an' kerridges an' servants an' all. An I 'longed to Miss Sue, o' co'se, me an' my ole man an' de chillen. But my brother an' his wife an' chillen, dee 'longed to Mars' Bob. An' Mars' Bob he got to drinkin' an' playin' an' every kind o' frolicking, an' he owed so much money at de las' dat he ain't know which way to tu'n. An' at las' de man what he owed de money to, he sent a man what levelled on Mars' Bob's folks for de money. An' dat man he brought dat ole Forepaw along what was a niggah-trader, an' he got de boy wid him, dat man you talkin' wid. He gettin' mighty fleshy now, jes' like he daddy. He tuck my own dear brother, an' he's wife an' two of de chillen, de likeliest ones, an' I ain't heerd of one of 'em since dat day. We—ll! He dead an' gone, an' I won't say nothin'."

"Poor things! You had your troubles," said Edith.

Aunt Phoebe wrapped her shawl tighter around her, and shook her head.

"Yes'm, we is. Yes, dat ole man Forepaw car'd away tree, fo', seben o' we all, what fell to Mars' Bob's share; an' dar was two tree field han's besides, what I not much 'quainted wid myself. I was in 'miration to see Miss Edith settin' down wid dat Major what ain't nuthin but po' white trash."

"He could not help being a nigger-trader's son, could he?" said Edith.

"Huh!" Aunt Phoebe paused for a moment. "He needn't be so mean an' lowlified, anyway. He de meanest lot! When de folks in de wagin, an' we all

sayin' goo'bye an' cryin', an' dee all cryin' fit to bust dee self, he come along an' say, 'Heish! you howlin' debbils, heish yo' mouf!' An' he crack his ole cowhide whip an' skeer dem chillen away what climbin' up to kiss deir own mammy goo'bye."

"Oh, stop, Aunt Phœbe, you will make me cry," said Edith. "Oh, what are my troubles to such as these!"

"Yes'm," said Aunt Phœbe after another pause. "Dat is ole Forepaw's boy, an' favours him mightily now he so fleshy. An' he had a gole watch, de old man had, an' shiny things all de way up he shut. De Major's on'y got one. Mebbe he done los' de rest of 'em. An' he on'y got one ring to he finger; now de ole man he got rings on mos' ebery finger. Yes, I thought while I settin' by, you an' you' daddy mek we all cry mightily one time. But I ain't say nothin'. You got to die so well as me. Huh!"

On her way home Edith stopped at Eliza's house, and told her of the trouble she was in. Eliza was indignant at the Major's offer, and besought her not to part with a single acre on such terms.

"Thomas heard tell that there's a lot of land speculators going round now, buying up poor people's land, specially among those that had the fever; and in a year they'll be selling it and making a big profit off it. It's a shame, and the Major is as bad as any of 'em," quoth Eliza.

Edith declared she would not sell an acre as long as she could pay the taxes on it, and then she unfolded a plan that had come into her head on her way homeward.

She knew, she said, that she could fit a dress a great deal better than some dressmakers. Why should she not try to get custom among the negro women, of whom so few were capable of making their own clothes? She depended on Eliza to make known her intention without loss of time.

Eliza was dumb for a moment. "Missus!" she said at last, and then, lowering her voice, "You wouldn't demean yourself by taking in work for they tramping black hussies!"

Edith said she should not feel she was lowering herself by doing honest work. And she would rather work for black people than for white people.

Eliza could not understand that. "Do'ee let me lend you some money, missus, my dear. It goes agin me so, a lady like you working for they blacks."

Edith kissed her and thanked her, but refused her offer. "While I am strong and able to work," she said, "I will do all that a woman can do before I borrow, even from such a dear friend as you are."

Eliza wept at Edith's obstinacy. "I've got money," she said, "and it's all mine, and Thomas don't know nothing about it. It ain't his business, and he's no call to know. Miss Luttrell paid me, handsome; and you shouldn't be *that* proud with your old nursey."

"If ever I really am in want, I will come to you," Edith said. But Eliza could not be comforted.

"A De Glanville working her eyes out for they nasty blacks!" she exclaimed. "If the old ladies knew! And they are rolling in riches. It don't seem vitty, and it ain't vitty."

"I shall never tell my aunts a word of this," cried Edith, "neither must you. Promise me you will not, Eliza."

Eliza promised, though reluctantly. For, she said, she could not see the rights of it, and never should, if she lived as long as Methuselah.

When Edith and her husband sat down together to review the situation, it did not seem so hopelessly bad, after all. Tregellas had taken Macfarlane into his confidence, and Macfarlane, who knew more of those matters than he did, had shown him that by paying up the accrued interest at once, and giving a bond for the amount of the lien secured on the place, endorsed by one or more responsible parties, he would put it out of the power of the creditor to press for the immediate payment of the principal, thereby giving himself sufficient time to get together the required amount. Of course if they had in the following year the same drought as they had had this year, they would be in the same situation as at present; but if, as was probable, next year was a year of plenty, the sale of his crops would bring in enough to clear him. At the same time they would have to practise the most rigid economy, and, having done all they could, put their trust in Providence for the rest.

Thus, shortly afterwards, the matter was arranged: the doctor and Trelease becoming the "endorsers" of Tregellas's bond. Tregellas, it is true, had to eat his own words, for he had vowed never to get into debt, and here he was in debt after all. As a consolation, Edith reminded him that the same thing might have

happened to a smarter man than he, and that, at all events, there was neither folly nor extravagance to be repented of. When Mrs. Macgregor found that Edith was working for negro women, she thought she must be in a very hard place, and offered to buy her pet Jersey heifer for ten dollars, an offer which Edith declined. As soon as Mrs. Macfarlane heard what her friend was doing, she brought her patterns and fashion-books, and offered to help in cutting out.

"I like helping people," she said, "especially people who help themselves instead of sitting down and howling. That's what put me out so with Mis' Bloss, when she was getting over her sickness. It seemed as if she depended on me to hold her up, or else she'd go flop, like a doll. I believe if I'd given in to her, I should be putting on her clothes for her to this day. And after all," Mrs. Macfarlane resumed, after a digression on an expected change in New York fashions, "after all, you are in luck. You haven't been left as I was with Frankie. No fear of your things being taken to pay your husband's debts. And you haven't been left as so many Southern women were left, after the war, with hardly a rag belonging to them or a mouthful to eat, and every man belonging to 'em maimed or dead. Ah, those were times!"

"When you remind me of that," said Edith, "I think that I am the most fortunate woman in the world."

CHAPTER XI.

HOMER SLOCUM.

IT was late in the year, but in the sun the air was still warm and pleasant, so that Mrs. Macfarlane had brought her work on the verandah. As she sat and plied her needle she hummed a Scotch tune her husband had taught her. She was very happy over her work. She had told her husband that she was going to emulate the economy her friend Edith was practising ; and instead of sending up north for hats in future, she was going to trim them herself. After a while, she had told him with glee, she would have saved enough money to take them a trip to Scotland. Macfarlane had answered jocosely ; but nevertheless she intended to do it. When a woman did give her mind to it, there were so many ways of saving !

A shadow fell on her work. She looked up and saw before her the man from whom she had been divorced.

She jumped up, crying "Homer Slocum, what do you want ?"

She trembled from head to foot as all her fears came back. What should he want, but to find out Frankie's

whereabouts? The child was spending the day with a playfellow, so that he was safe for the moment. She tried to speak calmly, repeating her question, "What do you want?"

He looked round. Then he said slowly, "Will you please remember my name is Enos B. Phillips? I want, first of all, a chair to sit upon. I guess this one is as handy as any,"—he drew from the wall Mr. Macfarlane's reading-chair and seated himself—"and then I want a glass of iced water: and after that, a little talk with you, if you've no objection."

Mrs. Macfarlane went to the dining-room and fetched what he asked for. She hated to go on such an errand, but it was better to serve him herself than to call Aunt Delphy or Jess, either of whom might be cross-questioned as to Frankie's whereabouts.

"You wear remarkably well, Parthenia," he remarked, as he took the glass from her. "I don't think I ever saw a woman wear better."

"Was that what you wished to say?" she asked, endeavouring to speak with a steady voice.

Homer Slocum smiled. Most people, especially plain people, look better when they smile. This man was not plain. In a crowd he might have been picked out any day as one of the handsome ones. But as he glanced now with a smile at his former wife, he looked ugly.

"Something else, of course. That was by the way," he said.

She made no reply, but stood waiting.

"Sit down," he said suddenly, pointing to the rocking-chair beside the work-table.

"I prefer standing," she said.

"As you please. You'll be tired standing, I guess, before I'm done. As he spoke he pulled the rocking-chair towards himself and put his feet upon it. Then he searched in his pocket for something.

"Got any chewing-tobacco?" he asked, after searching in vain.

"No," she answered.

"Got any chewing-gum?"

"No."

"Doggone!" he muttered, feeling again in his pockets.

"If this is all you have to say, you must excuse my staying any longer," she said, attempting to pass him.

He stretched out his hand and laid it on her arm: it closed like a vice on her tender flesh, and she felt powerless. It seemed as if an iron hand grasped her heart with just such a relentless pressure.

"Let me go!" she gasped, pale with anger and fright. "How dare you?"

He pushed her back towards a chair. "Just sit down there as I bid you, Parthenia," he said, as he took his hand from her arm. "I mean business."

"I forbid you to call me Parthenia," she cried. "You have no more right than if you were a stranger. I am *Mistress* Macfarlane, and you will please call me so."

Homer Slocum threw his head back and smiled again with half-shut eyes; he seemed to enjoy this exhibition of anger. As Mrs. Macfarlane gazed at him she thought she had never seen a man look so snake-

like as her good-looking ex-husband. But the half-closed eyes suddenly opened very wide, and he lifted a finger and shook it slowly at her.

"Mistress Macfarlane!—You are no more Macfarlane's wife than you are the President's wife. You are my wife. Do you understand? My wife."

She knew she was growing paler and paler as he looked at her; but she forced herself to speak steadily. "I obtained a divorce from you some years ago. You are no more to me than any other stranger.

"Well, I won't say but what you thought it was all right, but I've looked into the matter, and I find it was a bogus divorce. That's the business I've come about."

"A bogus divorce?" she repeated, jumping up from her chair.

He nodded. "There were a good many of them about that time. Parties that wanted the business done quietly, like yourself. Some of them have remarried, too. Awkward, ain't it?"

"But—but— No, I don't believe you," she cried suddenly. "You are just trying to scare me, that's all. I don't believe a word you say. Don't I know you of old, Homer Slocum?"

"It don't matter a cent's worth whether you know me of old or not. I tell you it's true." He took his legs down from the chair on which he had placed them, and leaned on the back of it, emphasising his words by rapping on it with his closed hand. "It's true, and you needn't try to get away from it. Wasn't Judge Pratt the judge at the Supreme Court of Centralia, when you got your decree?"

"Well—suppose he was?" she said.

"You admit so much. Of course, it would be no use your telling me a lie. You must have sense enough to see that, I should think. Well, the deputy-clerk and two other fellows are in custody now for forging the County Court seal, and the signatures of the County Clerk and of Judge Pratt." He paused to see what effect this would have on her. "Awkward for a good many folks, it's turned out: a good many folks that wanted to get a divorce cheap and quiet, as you did, eh?"

She bore it for a moment, bravely. Then she felt her strength giving way, and knew that if she did not sit down she might fall. She seated herself with her back towards him. He sat still waiting for her to speak, and tilting the chair in front of him with his foot.

"I wish I knew just what your motive was in coming to me with this tale," she said presently, turning herself half round. "I suppose you have a motive. Let us say you wish to annoy me. It seems hardly worth while to come all the way from Canada just for that. However, consider yourself to have succeeded and—go."

Homer put up his legs again and leaned back. "Not so fast. Of course I have a motive. There is a tender spot in me where you are concerned, Parthenia. You know I married you because I was fond of you."

She turned a face full of scorn towards him. "You used a shameful stratagem against a silly girl," she cried. "You entrapped me, you know you did! No blessing could rest on such a marriage, and no blessing did rest on it."

"Shucks! Why shouldn't I make use of stratagem?" he asked. "Did you never hear that all stratagems are fair in love and war?"

She had turned away again, disdaining to answer.

He took out his pocket-book and selected from the various papers in it a newspaper cutting which he handed Mrs. Macfarlane and told her to read. She refused.

"Now, what a very, very foolish little creature you are. You will have to control your temper, I can tell you, before you're through with this."

"Oh, if I had only a pistol handy!"—she cried, rising and confronting her ex-husband. "If I only—"

"Tut, tut, tut," he said, waving the newspaper cutting at her. "Sit down and let's have no more fooling. Now listen! This is business."

He had laid aside the deliberative drawling tone which he had assumed at the beginning of the interview, and he now read aloud, in a voice which had a hard metallic ring, as follows:—

"'Forged Divorces Discovered.

"'Extensive frauds at King's Court-house.

"'A Deputy-Clerk and two confederates arrested.

"'Startling revelations were made in Centralia yesterday in regard to the securing of fraudulent divorces by wholesale, by lawyers of that city who advertise "Divorces secured without publicity." They had secured as their tool a deputy-clerk of King's County Court, who forged the name of Judge Pratt, and used a counterfeit-seal of the county. Soon after he assumed office, District-Attorney Gubbleton——'

"Are you listening, Parthenia?" Homer asked in a parenthesis.

She turned and looked at him. He looked up and their eyes met. He gave her a nod and continued reading, while she looked at him with growing terror.

"—District-Attorney Gubbleton was led to suspect that spurious divorces were being palmed off as genuine. He followed up his clue, but was unable to secure satisfactory proof as to the way in which operations had been carried on, till last week. Suspicion fell upon Law—"

"You remember Law, Parthenia," Homer asked in another parenthesis. "Tow-headed fellow; used to sing tenor in the church choir when we lived at Equity?"

"I remember," she whispered. "Go on."

"Ah, I thought you'd get interested after a while. Where was I? 'Suspicion fell upon Law, who is a deputy clerk of the Supreme Court detailed to Judge Pratt's court, and on Saturday a warrant for his arrest was secured. He at first denied any participation in any forgery, and claimed that the records would show that all he had done was in strict conformity with law. Confronted with the proofs of his crime, he finally admitted his wrong-doing, and promised to aid the District Attorney in the work of clearing up the matter.'"

"Go on," said Mrs. Macfarlane, as he paused.

"You can study the rest for yourself," he said, throwing the paper on the table. "I have had the records searched, and there is no decree of divorce filed in your name."

"I don't see what you are going to do about it after all," said Mrs. Macfarlane, after a moment's silence. "If I didn't get a divorce that time, why I'll have to get one now. I acted in good faith any way, and if Mr. Paige had not believed I had good grounds for a divorce he wouldn't have put it through for me."

"Friend Paige is an old woman. Always was doty, in my opinion. If he had attended properly to business, instead of going on the stump and putting this thing into some other fellow's hands to straighten out, perhaps you'd have got your divorce all right. As it is——"

He got up, reached after his hat which he had laid on the table while speaking, put it on and stepped from the verandah. Then he turned and looked at her—"As it is, you have committed bigamy."

He paused to see what effect the word would have on her. Apparently she was not as much frightened at the sound of it as he had expected her to be. She said, with a toss of her head:

"Well, I didn't mean to commit bigamy. I don't believe any judge would say I did. Judges have common sense sometimes, though you lawyers think you can bamboozle them as you choose. And as for your desertion of me, I could bring plenty of witnesses. There's grandpa, for one."

"He's dead," said Homer abruptly.

"Dead!" she repeated after him. "Grandpa dead? I've not heard of it!"

"Because they didn't know where to find you. But I've heard of it. I know his lawyer."

She was silent for a moment, trying to think of some one who would be as efficient a witness. There was the lawyer, Paige; but as he had conducted the divorce proceedings, he might possibly be debarred from giving evidence. She ran over in her mind the names of her female friends: some were dead, some were married, some were gone she knew not whither. They had seemed a crowd, but it was no such easy matter to pick out one and say "This woman will bear witness for me." Suppose she would not; suppose she did not care; suppose that Homer Slocum was her friend's husband's friend, and offered him a bribe, how then would it be with her friend's testimony?

Homer spoke again. "He has left you forty thousand dollars."

She was still silent, looking on the ground. This, then, was the reason of his coming to annoy her. But for this he would have left her in peace.

"This thing will have to be fixed somehow," she said presently. "I don't know how, not being a lawyer; but of this you may be quite certain, I'll never live with you again."

"Then you'll have to answer the charge of bigamy, you may be certain of that. But you will think better of it. You are excited now, I shouldn't wonder."

"Homer Slocum," she said, rising and going up to him, "what will you take to leave me in peace? I know it's a question of money with you. Say what you'll take to leave me in peace."

"I'll take—— you and your forty thousand dollars," he said with a laugh. "I've made up my mind to that."

Mrs. Macfarlane drew herself up to her full height. "You've made up your mind?" she repeated. "Now let me tell you, Homer Slocum, if my daily bread depended on it—yes, and I learnt what it was to go to bed hungry after you deserted me—I say if my daily bread depended on it, I would never go back to you. Never!"

"Don't excite yourself," was his rejoinder. "And don't talk so big. You will be thankful to me for taking you back before you're through."

"Never!" she cried. "If there is a heaven above us, never!"

"Well, Parthenia, I do wish I could drive a little sense into your head. I don't want to make more noise over the business than I can help, and if you'd be sensible I'd be glad to spare your feelings. If you'd reflect a little you'd see how awkward it would be for you if it were known about here that you were living with that other fellow when you had a lawful husband in Canada. I don't like to say how awkward it might be for you."

"I do not doubt," she said, "that you would like to make it very awkward for me."

He laughed again. "Well, it would depend a good deal on yourself. Now, see here——" he stepped back on the verandah and seated himself on a chair near her. "If you would just make up your mind to come along quietly——"

She jumped up with a scream. "What!!"

"I said, 'Come along quietly.' What will you get by making a fuss?"

"Is the man crazy?" she cried, wringing her hands. "What! Leave my baby and—and—my little boy!"

Her voice broke, and she laughed aloud, walking up and down the verandah and clasping and unclasping her hands.

"What a fool you must think me, to be sure!" she said, stopping in front of Homer. "I wouldn't leave my baby for the best man that ever lived, and you don't think I'd leave him for *you*! No; and I wouldn't leave the—the—other little fellow either. Oh, why do you come and talk such nonsense to me? And you a lawyer too! One would think you'd have more sense."

Homer did not seem surprised at this outburst. He took out his pocket-book and began to look at the papers in it. Presently he said:

"I'm sorry that little one died. When did it happen?"

"Which—which one do you mean?" she said with a gasp.

"Ours, of course. I thought he was a healthy baby enough. What did he die of?"

She had become very pale, and stood leaning one hand on the back of her chair and pressing the other to her heart. "Don't—don't you speak of him to me. You left us both to starve. If I was pinched, so was he. If you didn't care enough for me to send money, you might have cared for him. Everything—my very bed—was taken for your debts. Oh, don't you dare to speak of him to me."

He did not answer at once, but sat, crossing and uncrossing his legs, and giving other indications of a mind not quite at ease. At last he said, "As to my

going, you may believe me when I tell you I had to go. If you had been on your dying bed I'd have had to go—in the fix I was in.”

“I can quite believe that,” she replied.

“And as to sending money—well, I hadn't got the dollars to send. I didn't suppose you would be so pinched as you say, for I thought you'd be smart enough to save something out of the wreck, and I knew you had lots of friends.”

“So I supposed, as long as I didn't need them.”

“Well,” he resumed, “I'd like to have this business settled. Now, just listen, will you, and don't start off and scream. I am willing to stretch a point. You may bring your baby along. I'll put up with it under the circumstances for at any rate as long as it needs your care.”

Mrs. Macfarlane stared at him as if she did not understand.

He added: “I don't think every man would make such an offer as that.”

“Thank you,” she said buskily. “And, my other little boy?”

“Oh, hang it all,” he broke out, “I ain't going to be saddled with both brats. His father, Macfarlane, must look out for him. He's no baby, if that's the chap I saw running round the corner last time I was here.”

“Last time!—what last time?” she asked with a voice that was scarcely audible.

He replied, carelessly: “Oh, some little time ago. I wanted to identify you, and it was just as cheap to come myself as to send any one else.”

She stood still and stared at him, dumb with horror. Yet even then her brain was busy calculating how to keep Frankie from him; how to send the child away so that he should be beyond the reach of Homer. Why had she not changed the child's name when she got her divorce? That would have made him safer at any rate. And now it was too late! Should Homer come here, watching and prying, as he had done already, and hear the child called "Frankie," he would begin to observe him, suspect perhaps that he was his own child, and then—she would never see Frankie any more unless she went back to Frankie's father. A stouter heart than Mrs. Macfarlane's might have quailed at such a prospect. She stood staring at the man for a minute. Then she tottered to a seat, and grasped her head with both hands.

"I shall go crazy; I shall go crazy," she moaned.

"Come now, come now," said he. "What's the good of taking it so hard. Try to be reasonable."

"It's easy talking," she said. "Could any woman be reasonable in such a horrible fix as this? No, I won't be reasonable, Homer Slocum. I can't, and I won't."

"You can suit yourself about that," said he. "I can tell you what is likely to happen if you won't. You will have to answer the charge of bigamy. I am getting most tired of telling you that. And you might make the acquaintance of the state penitentiary."

"I might?"—she said, hesitating.

"Ah, you might. I don't say you would. That depends entirely on yourself, don't you see, Parthenia?"

"Well," she said, after a short silence, "my mind is made up, and don't you suppose I am ever going to alter it. I'll never live with you again. If you can put me in the penitentiary, you may put me in the penitentiary. They won't keep me there for ever, and when I come out, I shall go back to my husband."

"Your husband!" he sneered.

"To my husband, Mr. Macfarlane. I am his wife before God and man; and I do not look upon you as my husband any more than if you were dead."

"Is that your last word?" he asked.

"That is my last word," she answered.

"Then," he returned, bringing his clenched hand down on the little table with such force that the work-basket slipped off, and the contents lay scattered in all directions—"then it is to be war between us. You will be sorry for this, Parthenia. I am determined to have my rights. I am going to fight it out. You see if I don't."

He rose as he spoke. She rose too. Her terror had passed off and she looked excited.

"Your rights!" she cried. "Your rights! You forged my name, and you swindled me out of my mother's money to pay your disgraceful debts, and you left me and your child to starve. And you talk of your rights!—Suppose I made it public that you forged my name? Suppose I told how you got away with fifty thousand dollars of the public money—"

"Oh, pshaw! much good that would do you," he said. But she, with her eyes fixed on his face, saw that he winced.

"I could do it, and I will. I'll make Canada too hot to hold you. I'll publish in all the papers what your right name is, and what you have done. You think yourself such a smart man, coming here troubling me. How smart will you think yourself when you are in Sing Sing, with your hair cut short, Mr. Enos B. Phillips?"

"I guess I know enough to keep out of Sing Sing. And I can tell you this, if you don't come back to me it will be the worse for you," said Homer. As he spoke he turned on his heel, and went up the path leading to the road where his buggy was waiting. Mrs. Macfarlane watched him till he was hidden by the overhanging bushes. Then she went into the house and into her own room and locked the door. She even shut the windows and let down the blinds. Then she took from her bureau a small tin box and opened it. On the top was a little cardboard box in which were some trinkets Mr. Macfarlane had given her. She took it out and laid her cheek upon it, murmuring, "My dear, my dear." Then she lifted up the tray, and took out some folded papers, one of which she spread before her. It was a decree of absolute divorce granted to Mrs. Parthenia Slocum from Homer P. Slocum, upon the report of John G. Law, referee, made to Judge Pratt in the Supreme Court of Centralia, on January 24th, 18—.

As she looked at it, she reverted to the belief that the document was genuine. What though Homer had said that no such decree of divorce had been found in the records of the Supreme Court? How was she to know that he was stating the truth? The newspaper cutting was genuine enough, but how could she tell that Homer

had not concocted it? If he did not stick at forging his wife's name, why should he stick at the dissemination of false news? Many people thought lying did not matter much—not enough at any rate to interfere with church membership—when for instance the lie was intended to damage a political opponent. On the eve of one of the Presidential elections, it had been said by half the newspapers in the country that the wife of one of the candidates was not his wife, though he had been living with her for more than twenty years. That Presidential candidate had prosecuted the editor of one of the biggest newspapers; he had pursued that editor from court to court until there was no higher court to appeal to; and got such damages as would have ruined the editor, if the newspaper had not doubled its circulation in consequence of its copious reports of the trial, and of the private interviews with members of the Presidential candidate's family. Mrs. Macfarlane thought of this, and thought too how Homer had never hesitated at any act that enabled him to carry out his own plans. She almost reasoned herself into the belief that he was now making an illegal attempt to victimise her. Again she thought of Frankie's danger and of the best way of saving him from his heartless father.

At last sunset came, and supper-time, and Mr. Macfarlane.

She watched him as he lit his pipe after supper, and stretched himself in his easy chair with his newspaper. He looked so happy, so free from care, poor man, taking his ease after his day's work, that it did seem cruel to disturb his comfort. But it had to be done.

"I wanted to talk to you about Frankie," she began timidly.

"Talk away, my dear," was the answer.

"I can't talk while you are reading the newspaper."

"There," he said laying it down. "Now you may talk till bed-time, so long as you don't take away my pipe."

She brought her low chair and placed it close beside him.

"How comfortable you look, dear," she said, laying her hand on his knee. He gave her hand a squeeze as he replied, "Ay, ay, I believe in taking the good the gods provide me."

She laid her cheek on his hand and caressed it silently.

"We have been happy, haven't we?" she said presently.

"To be sure we have. And we'll go on being happy, eh?"

She let go his hand. "Oh, nothing that is good or pleasant lasts in this world," she cried. "Nothing nothing!"

"What a little pessimist!" he said with a laugh.

"It's the truth. Jim, I want you to do something for me. I want you to take Frankie away from here and put him to school; right away."

"Why," said Macfarlane, taking his pipe out of his mouth, "only last week you said you could not make up your mind to do it just yet."

"I know, I know. But it is different now. He must go, Jim; I want you to take him to-morrow."

"Take him—where?"

"Anywhere, so it is away from here—away from me."

"Well, I'll think about it. There's no such hurry."

"Yes, there is. Jim,—” she came a little closer, and spoke low—"Homer Slocum was here this morning, and nearly scared me to death with the things he said."

Macfarlane jumped up. "He dared come to my house! And you—you parleyed with the scoundrel!"

"As if I could help it! I bade him begone, and much he cared for my bidding."

"Why did you stop to listen to him?"

"Because I could not help myself. He laid hold of my arm. And he told me my divorce was a bogus divorce."

"The scoundrel!" said Macfarlane, clenching his fist. "He said that just to annoy you. Bogus divorce, indeed!"

"I thought so, too, until he showed me this paper." She took the newspaper cutting out of her pocket and put it into his hand.

He read it. His healthy, florid face lost its colour as he read; and as he finished he drew a deep breath.

"Oh, Jim," she said, "then it is genuine?"

"It appears so." She took his hand and held it, all limp and nerveless as it was, in hers. Presently he rose and paced up and down the room; and then, as if there were not space enough in the room, he went out on the verandah. She, watching him from where she sat, saw him raise his hands to his head, and for a moment she forgot her own misery in her grief for his. When he

returned he sat down beside her, and desired her to tell him every word that Slocum had said.

She obeyed. "And I know it is only because of grandpa's money that he comes troubling me," she said, when she had finished. "But for that he would have left me in peace as long as I lived."

"Very likely," Macfarlane replied, and then he began to walk up and down again on the verandah, and mutter to himself. She bore it till she could bear it no longer, and then she cried out that she wished she were dead.

But he, returning to the seat he had quitted, took her hands in his, and told her never to say that again.

"You have been a blessing and a comfort to me," he said, "and nothing can alter that. Whatever comes there will be that to look back on and be thankful for."

"Jim, you are never going to give me up to that cruel man?" she cried, clinging to him.

"Never, of my own free will. I am no lawyer, but I know that our intentions were upright and honourable. So much we can prove—"

"I am not that man's wife. No court shall ever make me look on him as my lawful husband."

Macfarlane groaned.

"I am your wife—yours!" she cried. "If you give me up, I shall die. Yes, I would rather die than go back to him. And he to pretend to be so considerate!—He wouldn't mind my taking baby along for a time, but he wouldn't be saddled with the other brat!" and she burst into hysterical laughter.

There was a long silence on his part, which she did

not interrupt. At last he said, "It is late; you had better go to bed."

"And you? You have your work to do to-morrow, Jim."

"I must think," he said. He took his hat and went out into the woods. And she sat waiting for him, till she fell asleep at last for weariness.

When she woke dawn was breaking and Macfarlane was speaking to her.

"Have you only just come in?" she said.

He replied that he had done what was best for himself, and found fault with her gently for sitting up. "Go and lie down at once," he said. "You have time for a nap before breakfast."

It comforted her to hear him speak with so much authority. "I'm going right away," she said, with an attempt at a smile.

Before Macfarlane went away to his work he told his wife he would get a few days' leave of absence, and go to Centralia to examine the records. If there were no record of her divorce, he would seek out the lawyer, Paige, who had conducted her case, and lay the matter before him.

"And you will take Frankie with you and leave him at the Academy at Jonesville?" she enquired.

He assented. Then she said:—

"I have been thinking it would be better if we moved away from here."

"I don't see how that would help us," he answered.

"But if we went right off to——say to Scotland——"

"I could not do that, my dear; and if you will

think for a moment, you will see that you could not either."

"Well, then—" she hesitated—"will you do this for me? Will you promise not to let them know at the Academy that Frankie is not your very own?"

"My dear, he is the son of my adoption," said Macfarlane; and there was such rebuke in his tone that she could not say another word.

CHAPTER XII.

AN INTERVIEW AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

A FEW days after Homer Slocum's visit, Mrs. Macfarlane saw a man pass the verandah and go towards the kitchen. There was a lively dialogue between him and the cook, and then she heard Aunt Delphy's voice saying, "She's settin' in de pahlah. You kin go right in."

Mrs. Macfarlane's first impulse was to run and lock herself in her bedroom. Ever since the day when her first husband had come so suddenly upon her, the sight of a stranger coming to the house had filled her with unreasoning dread. But a glance at the man showed him to be a harmless looking, youthful person, with a pale budding moustache. He had a town-bred semi-fashionable air, though his clothes were slightly shabby. He held a note-book in his hand, and was jotting down notes or figures in it as he looked about him. Then it occurred to Mrs. Macfarlane that perhaps after all her husband had changed his mind and was going to sell the place and take her away to Scotland, and this was an intending purchaser.

This seemed to her all the more likely, as the young

man, instead of coming to the door, still looked about and walked away a little and then back again, as if he were observing how the house was situated. But presently he stepped to the door and knocked, and she opened it and asked him civilly to walk in. He entered, note-book in hand, asking whether he had the pleasure of addressing Mistress Macfarlane.

She tried to put on her usual company smile as she answered. She offered him a seat, and regretted that her husband was from home. His way of looking about him, as though he were going to take an inventory of the furniture, strengthened her impression that he was an intending purchaser. He remarked that she seemed to be fixed up tolerably well, and she replied that the house was very comfortable, and that all the outbuildings had been erected on the most approved plan, and were very convenient.

The young man looked round the room and then said, "You know the *Mugwump*, I reckon, madam; I'm from the *Mugwump*. John E. Styracks is my name, madam."

Mrs. Macfarlane bowed and inquired if he were the editor.

John E. Styracks appeared amused at the inquiry. No, he said, he was not the editor. And down went a note in his note-book.

"Did you wish to write a notice on *Harmonia*?" said she.

"Well," he said, "that's near about it. *Harmonia* is becoming quite an interesting object to the public. In fact, the public eye in this section is fixed right on *Harmonia* and nowhere else."

Mrs. Macfarlane said she was glad to hear it. To be sure the drought had caused great losses, but she did not suppose it possible that there could be another such drought again. Was Mr. Styracks thinking of buying land in the settlement? And would not he wait and see Mr. Macfarlane.

"Not to-day," the young man said. Then turning a fresh leaf of his note-book and reaching for a chair to support his foot upon, he said, "I believe you were the plaintiff in the bogus divorce case of Slocum v. Slocum?" Mrs. Macfarlane was so taken aback that she made no reply.

"You were Mrs. Parthenia Slocum, before you became Mrs. Macfarlane, weren't you?" He held his pencil poised as he awaited her answer.

Mrs. Macfarlane rose. "What right have you to enter a lady's house and ask questions in this way?"

"No offence, madam. I'm a servant of the public, and I come on behalf of the public. This is quite a special piece of news, and will be treated accordingly. I want the *Mugwump* to get the beat on the others. It's bound to have it as long as John E. Styracks is on the staff. Now then—if you will be so kind——"

"You have no right to pry into people's private affairs," cried Mrs. Macfarlane. "I forbid you to write one word about me in your newspaper. If you do, I'll write and contradict it."

"Madam, you could not do us a greater service," said Mr. John E. Styracks. "Let me beg of you to contradict every word I write, and I'll promise every word you write shall appear."

Mrs. Macfarlane was at her wits' end. "I never heard such impertinence—never!" she cried.

"No impertinence, madam; none whatever," said the young man briskly. "The public are interested, and the public have a right to know. And the public's bound to know. And that's all about it."

Mrs. Macfarlane went to the door and called "Bismarck!" A bark and a yelp and the shaking of a chain were heard round the house corner, and a large bull pup appeared, dragging vainly at his chain which was fastened to his kennel. She stood on the verandah and spoke.

"Now, sir, you see this dog. He won't hurt me, because I feed him; but if I just say one word, he'll go for you, and I reckon there won't be much left of you by the time I call him off."

"Madam, you are joking," said Mr. John E. Styracks. But his face became several shades paler, and he put his hand behind him. This gesture exasperated Mrs. Macfarlane.

"You'd better keep your six-shooter in your pocket," she cried. "You just bring it out, and I'll let the dog loose. You're no shot, I know."

As she spoke she began to unfasten the chain, and the bull pup in the expectation of liberty gave growls of delight.

Mr. John E. Styracks was a plucky fellow, after a fashion. He had eaten a considerable amount of dirt since he had taken up the calling of reporter and special interviewer, and he was quite willing to eat a great deal more if the *Mugwump* might profit by it. He had only

been kicked down stairs once or twice; for by great good luck he had usually interviewed citizens in their offices on the ground floor. But he had always preserved a whole skin, so far, and now that it appeared possible that he might be lacerated in the discharge of his duty, he was conscious of a singular sensation which mingled with, though it did not extinguish, his zeal.

"Madam, I do assure you—if you would but let me explain—madam, I beg you to do nothing rash. I should be sorry to have to shoot that dog. I should indeed."

"You shoot! Don't believe you can take aim. Now then, are you going?" said Mrs. Macfarlane with her hand on the dog's collar. "If I just say 'Tramp,' and let go, it's all over with you."

"Upon my word, madam—" the reporter began.

"I give you two minutes to get out of this door yard," cried Mrs. Macfarlane. "I'll try to hold him so long, but I won't promise. Jess, come and help hold this dog," she cried to the boy who was seated at the kitchen door staring at the stranger and grinning from ear to ear.

To him as well as to Aunt Delphy this dispute between the "mistiss" and the stranger was a rare bit of pantomime unexpectedly provided for their amusement. Mr. John E. Styacks considered it best not to stand upon the order of his going. He had hardly seated himself in the buggy which was waiting for him on the other side of the fence, when Bismarck came tearing up the path dragging his chain after him.

Next day there appeared in the *Mugwump* a long article with sensational headings thrown in at distances

of ten or twelve lines. "Thrilling Escape!" "Our Reporter attacked by a Bulldog!" "Severe injuries sustained" "In the Exercise of his Duty." "To the Proprietors and the Public."

The *Mugwump* was not read much in Harmonia, but it was taken regularly by the proprietor of the Alum Spring House as were all the other local papers, and on the day succeeding its publication, Sylvia found Mrs. Lovett and Mrs. Macgregor in the ladies' parlour with their heads bent close together over the paper, exclaiming at the extraordinary story about Mrs. Macfarlane.

"One never knows people," Mrs. Macgregor remarked to Sylvia. "Who would have supposed that Mrs. Macfarlane was a bigamist!"

Sylvia exclaimed at the horrid newspaper. Of course there was not a word of truth in it. Probably it would be contradicted in the next issue.

But the next issue contained fuller particulars of the Macfarlane-Slocum affair. The guests at Alum Spring House knew—thanks to the *Mugwump*—that Mr. Macfarlane had been to Centralia: that he had examined the records in vain for the divorce of Mrs. Parthenia Slocum from Homer P. Slocum: that Lawyer Paige would be a witness in the new divorce suit which was instituted, and that the fraudulent clerk Law would be a witness to the forgery of the name of the judge and of the official seal in the first divorce suit. The name of the counsel employed was given, and the amount of his retaining fee.

Sylvia would have liked to buy up (and burn) the whole edition of the *Mugwump*, but she knew that not

even that—not even her buying up the whole concern—would keep the story a secret. It was in every newspaper. Her friends mentioned it in their letters. Had she ever happened to come across the plaintiff in this strange affair? they asked. Sylvia almost wept with vexation. She had liked Mrs. Macfarlane so much, and now she did not know whether she was a person that ought to be visited. When she heard Mrs. Macgregor and Mrs. Lovett declare that they could no longer consider Mrs. Macfarlane as their friend, then Sylvia felt as if she herself must uphold her. But when she thought of the matter as between Mrs. Macfarlane and herself, she did not feel sure that Mrs. Macfarlane had been altogether without blame. She could not do what would be the only satisfactory thing: ask Mrs. Macfarlane what the circumstances were. She thought that it would look better if Mrs. Macfarlane left her present husband and resided somewhere else until the new suit had been heard. When she returned to Harmonia and found that Mrs. Macfarlane was living as she had been since the beginning of their acquaintance, she was more perplexed than ever.

“I wouldn’t mind the world’s talk,” she said to Miss Priest, “if I could but feel sure, myself, that she were doing quite right. But I do not feel sure.”

“I guess that what matters most is that she should be satisfied she’s doing right,” said Miss Priest.

“Yes, of course that is paramount. Oh dear, how good she was to everybody last summer! How she sat up with Mrs. Lovett and Mrs. Bloss! I believe they were as trying patients as a nurse could have, yet she

never grumbled. I don't care!—I will go and see her," said Sylvia.

She went. She tried to be affectionate : she was so afraid of being cold that perhaps she overdid it. But she found no response in Mrs. Macfarlane. She was in great trouble, she said, and she did not know when she should be out of it : and she thanked Sylvia for coming to see her, but she did not wish her to come any more.

Sylvia tried to say something about their being always friends after what they had gone through last summer ; but Mrs. Macfarlane stopped her.

"What of last summer ? Mis' Lovett has not been near me since she came back, and Mis' Bloss—she—she wouldn't speak to me on the street yesterday."

"Oh, how could she !" cried Sylvia, kissing her.

Mrs. Macfarlane smiled a wan smile. "It did cut me—a little," she said. "But it is no use complaining. I have just got to live straight through it. I know that."

Sylvia, as she rose to take leave, said she would come again soon. But Mrs. Macfarlane repeated that she did not wish it. She would be sorry for Sylvia to do what might be displeasing to her friends. As for herself she had made up her mind that she would have to do without friends.

Sylvia insisted that she always did as she pleased, not as her friends pleased. But in her heart she knew well that more than one of her friends in the north would take her severely to task if she did not give up Mrs. Macfarlane, and she did not wish to put it into the power of any woman to take her to task. It was fortunate that she was going down to Florida before

long. Perhaps by the time she came back her present difficulty would have adjusted itself; the Macfarlanes might have left Harmonia. If not, it would be very easy for her to go up north without stopping at Harmonia. Were she in Mrs. Macfarlane's position, she thought, her first desire would be to escape from a place where she was so well known, after such a wretched story as this had been connected with her name. She tried to find out what Edith thought about it; but Edith refused to discuss it. It was distressing from beginning to end, she said, and they could do no good to Mrs. Macfarlane by talking it over. Sylvia admired Edith's loyalty, though she could not but think her reticence a little strained.

If Macfarlane had had any hope of keeping his wife's name out of the papers, that hope vanished before he left Centralia. He turned his back unceremoniously on a couple of interviewers. They jotted down his attire, his probable age, his curt refusal, and the opinion of the hotel clerk on him as a transient guest, and walked a hundred yards down the street to interview Mrs. Macfarlane's counsel. All the way home the Macfarlane-Slocum case was in his ears. It was the topic in restaurants, at breakfast, dinner, and supper. It was the salient item of news shouted by newsboys as they boarded the trains till he stepped out on the Harmonia Junction platform. He warned his wife that people would draw their own conclusions; that it was the way of the world to draw conclusions that were hard and cruel, and that they must not expect an exception to be made because she happened to be the

innocent victim of a fraud. All they could do, he said, was to keep a stiff upper lip, and be thankful that their own consciences did not accuse them. The divorce suit was already on the docket; there would be no attempt at a private hearing this time; it was one of the cases in which it was better to wash one's dirty linen in public. There was not a doubt of its terminating in her favour, but it would not come on for hearing till some time in the Christmas term. Until it was over, Macfarlane said, they would remain in Harmonia. If, afterwards, his wife thought she would be happier in a new place, they would pull up stakes and he would try to make a living somewhere else; but not till then. Being innocent, they owed it to themselves not to act as though their consciences accused them. All he could do for her, meanwhile, was to keep away the newspapers from her. She knew—poor soul—when there was a mention of the Macfarlane-Slocum case, by his pretence at forgetting the paper, which he was generally so careful to bring home to her. After a little while, the newspapers had something fresh to fill their columns; but Macfarlane was conscious whenever he went abroad, that the Macfarlane-Slocum case was still the sensation in Harmonia. He could not help noticing how some of his acquaintance began to pass by on the other side; how others shook hands with him as it were under protest; how one or two, notably the Colonel, looked at him with unspoken pity. Macfarlane was a man of tough fibre; he had worked his way sturdily upwards, and could give and take hard knocks. But now he began to

understand how a woman, though innocent, may wish to run away and hide herself as though she were guilty.

Mrs. Macfarlane had told herself, as she had told Sylvia, that she must learn to do without friends. She had sent some excuse to Edith for not spending an afternoon with her as she had appointed: for now the story of the bogus divorce was in the papers, she did not know whether Edith would welcome her. She had always felt that Edith was a sincere friend, but she supposed that the sincerest friendship has its limitations. Edith, who did not care to read the American newspapers, was perhaps the last person in Harmonia to hear the story. She did not hear of it till she had sent a note to Mrs. Macfarlane begging her to come and help her with her cutting out as soon as she could spare an afternoon. It was after her note was gone that she heard the story of the bogus divorce case, as told by Mrs. Macgregor, now returned from the Alum Springs. Then she thought she understood why her friend had failed to keep her appointment; and, not hearing from her after the interval of a day, she went to see her.

She found her in tears, with an open letter lying by her. She wept afresh as Edith embraced her. "Ah," she cried, "I do believe I have got one friend in the world after all; one, besides my poor Jim. Oh, I have had such a cruel letter from Mr. Bloss. We said—that is Jim said—we were to go to church as usual; we were not to make any difference.—Of course you have heard of the trouble we are in?"

"That was why I came," said Edith.

Mrs. Macfarlane pressed her hand. "That was like

you. Mr. Bloss thinks I ought not to go to church. And he tells me why, pretty plainly. Do you wish to see what he says?"

"No!" said Edith.

"I won't show it to Jim. It would only make trouble. Jim would be ready to kill him, I think, and that would not help any. I'll burn it." She tore the letter up and threw it in the fire. "Now, if you will advise me, I'll listen, because I think you really are fond of me. But I will not bind myself to take any one's advice, not even yours. Only, if you speak, I will listen."

"Who am I that I should advise you?" said Edith.

"You are afraid. You don't like the responsibility."

"I am not afraid. But I have no right; I cannot know every circumstance. You yourself must decide."

Mrs. Macfarlane looked thoughtfully at the fire for a moment. Then she spoke again:—"That man says I ought to leave Jim. Well, if Jim and I were rich, I don't say what we mightn't do. He might go to Scotland, and I might go to the Springs or anywhere I felt like going, till this business is over. But we are not rich: we are poor, and we will be poorer still before we're through. And Jim—oh, my poor Jim!—how he feels this! He says nothing, but don't I know how to read his face by this time? Don't I know that his hair is getting grey, and that he is walking about half the night, instead of sleeping quietly in his bed as he used to?—If I were to leave him what would he do? He would be so miserable he wouldn't know what to do. And I should be so miserable away from him, I should

be fit to go crazy. Besides"—she had wept a little while speaking of her husband, but now she dried her eyes and looked defiant—"Mr. Bloss may say what he pleases, but Jim Macfarlane is my husband, as much as Mr. Tregellas is yours."

"I am sure there can be no doubt in your own mind," said Edith. "But—if you should see fit to change your intention of staying in your own house at present, come and stay with me."

"You mean that?"

"Indeed I mean it"

Mrs. Macfarlane hesitated. "You are very kind. No sister could be kinder—but—I'm thinking of Jim. Oh, you think it won't be very long and it won't matter, but I know Jim better than you do. I can't leave him, I can't. If you were in such a fix, would you leave your husband, knowing he was your husband?"

Edith shook her head. "I know I could not."

"There! That's what you say. You would defy Bloss. Very well, I'm going to defy Bloss. I've felt sometimes as if I must give up, I've been so crushed. But I won't be crushed any longer. And—there's one good thing about this wretched business. There's been nothing said in the papers about Frankie." She spoke his name in a whisper.

Edith said she had not seen any of the papers.

"Nor have I. But I asked Mr. Macfarlane if Frankie's name was in the papers at all, and he said No. So after all there is something to be thankful for."

At the last, Mrs. Macfarlane's sunny nature asserted itself. She smiled as Edith bade her adieu and

promised to come on an early day to help her with her cutting out. If there was a drought next year, she said, they would do well to set up a dressmaking establishment in Harmonia main street, and depend on coloured ladies' custom. She heard that all the able-bodied negroes were going to work on the new railroads down south, so they would be making money if the Harmonia farmers did not. And if the farmers could make no money, the farmers' wives had better try what they could do. She thought "Tregellas and Macfarlane" would look mighty well over a store window, with a coloured fashion model inside.

CHAPTER XIII.

"MY HORSE, MY ASS, MY ANYTHING."

SYLVIA had not long returned from the Alum Springs, when she heard that Mr. Garlick was back, and that he had been ill, and was staying with the Tregellases. When she was told this, she made up her mind that her stay in Harmonia should be as short as possible.

As far as Mr. Garlick was concerned, the expedition had been a complete *fiasco*. He had been down in malarial fever almost from the beginning, and had been forced to turn back to the little seaport whence the expedition had started. It was some weeks before he was capable of acting on the letter and the telegram relating to Mr. Denning. He had then started in a sailing vessel bound to New Orleans, had had a relapse, and had lain ill for a long time at the St. Charles Hotel.

He had not been many days at his friends' house before he told Edith the reason of his leaving Harmonia "But I suppose you know already," he said.

"I know nothing," said Edith.

"I thought women always told each other such things

"Some women would, but not Sylvia."

"Ah, Sylvia!—Sylvia is the one woman in the world for me. I said I would come back in a year and ask her again; but I suppose it is hopeless. And this fever has left me such a wreck!—"

"If she liked you that would make no difference, except in your favour."

"I don't know. I think she is one of those women who cannot stoop to matrimony."

"Cannot rise to it, you mean," cried Edith.

"Ah, that is how you look at it."

"That is how every right-minded woman looks at it."

"I don't know," said he. "Of course there is in matrimony some inevitable chronicling of small beer. It is that, I think, that she shrinks from. But it is no wonder. She is so clever, so cultivated."

"If she shrinks from the inevitable chronicling of small beer," said Edith, "it is because she is wanting in heart."

"Oh, no!—only that I have not been fortunate enough to touch her heart."

Edith took an early opportunity of seeing Sylvia and telling her what Mr. Garlick had said.

"Why do you keep away?" she asked. "It would do him so much good to see you. It was all on your account that he went away on that horrid expedition. Even now he has at times a slight recurrence of the malaria, and it leaves him in such low spirits."

"Don't put the responsibility on me," cried Sylvia. "I did not tell him to leave Harmonia; quite the contrary. If he went, it was because he chose to go."

"I think you are very hard-hearted," said Edith. "He is quite as clever as you are, and he has money, and he is very much devoted to you."

"As if I could help that!—I wish he were not."

"And he is very good. One can tell that by the way he behaves. Some men are such bears when they are ill."

Sylvia professed herself willing to believe that Mr. Garlick possessed every good quality. But, she added, he had one fatal defect, which would effectually prevent her marrying him, even were she inclined. Edith asked what that was.

"He is an Englishman," said Sylvia.

Edith laughed. "I have heard of American ladies marrying Englishmen. Especially English noblemen."

Sylvia reddened. "I don't deserve that, Mrs. Tregellas."

Edith kissed her. "Dear Sylvia, if I could but persuade you to listen to him! He cannot help being an Englishman, you know."

Sylvia walked up and down the room before she replied. For a moment she stood looking out of window, and Edith thought that a symptom of wavering. She sat silently waiting for her reply.

"He cannot help being an Englishman," said Sylvia at length, "but I can help marrying an Englishman. And I tell you plainly that I so hate the English notions of marriage that nothing—nothing would ever induce me to marry an Englishman. What!—I, a freeborn American, become a chattel? Never!"

Edith forebore to laugh. "My dear Sylvia, what

could put such nonsense into your head? Do you mean to tell me I am a chattel, for instance?"

"Yes," said Sylvia unflinchingly. "You are a chattel. Every married Englishwoman is her husband's chattel. What does Petruchio say of Katharine?—'my horse, my ass, my anything.' And an Englishman can sell his wife still, and have a deed of sale drawn up by a lawyer. Such a thing was done less than forty years ago."

Edith laughed. "Dear Sylvia, I see now the meaning of that phrase in the Marriage Service, 'to have and to hold.' But surely it is what the learned people call a 'survival.' Now if you would marry Mr. Garlick, you two might write an interesting book about it. And you might make him go into parliament and bring in a bill to abolish the selling of wives."

But Sylvia objected to Edith's *badinage*. She would not come to her friend's house, she said, as long as Mr. Garlick stayed, because it would be a pity to raise false hopes in his mind.

Miss Priest, who always did as she pleased about going to see people, chose to go and see Mr. Garlick, and brought back a bad report of him to Sylvia. He was aged ten years, and he was little more than a skeleton. "I suppose he was taken care of after a fashion," she said, "because else he would have died. But I could see he hadn't had such nursing as you gave to the poorest patient that came to your hospital, Sylvy."

Sylvia said she was sorry: and what more could she say? She wished never to hear another word about Mr. Garlick. She did not see that because a man had

caught a malarial fever in Central America, she must needs marry him.

But, if Sylvia did not choose to say anything more about Mr. Garlick, she had a great deal to say about Mary Ellacombe. She thought Mary much fallen off in looks and spirits while she had been away at Alum Springs, and she declared it made her miserable to see a girl sacrificed as Mary was being sacrificed. She wondered how people who called themselves Christians, as the Ellacombes did, could bow down before such an old-world fetish as rank. Had she been in Raine's place she would have persuaded Mary to run away and get married long ago. That he had not done so, showed how little he knew her real value. This British farmer's daughter was worth a hundred members of an effete aristocracy such as Raine.

"They come out here," cried Sylvia, "with their empty heads and empty pockets, and what are they? Cumberers of the ground, every one!"

Miss Priest agreed heartily with her. They were both surprised when one day Raine called and boldly asked Sylvia to invite Mary to her house so that he might speak to her. Mrs. Tregellas, he said, pretended to be neutral; but she would not even carry a message from him to Mary, so that her neutrality was a very unfriendly one.

"Perhaps," said Sylvia, "she did not think you in earnest."

"Not in earnest!" Raine exclaimed. "I offered Mary to get a licence and marry her, last spring, standing under those very trees!"

This was satisfactory, and Sylvia promised to help him

if she could. Raine wrung both her hands in his gratitude, and declared she was worth a hundred of Mrs. Tregellas. Mrs. Tregellas had always given him good advice, and he detested good advice.

"That is what people call it when they want you to go their way, and you want to go your own way. Now Mrs. Tregellas ought to know that in England when a man marries he raises his wife to his own rank. Of course, if the case were reversed—if a young lady wanted to marry a farmer's son, it would be another thing."

"Would it?" said Sylvia with the air of one asking for information.

"Of course it would! They would have to shut her up. But in my case it is so different. Everything is so different out here."

"You talk of raising Mary to your rank," said Sylvia. "I don't know what your rank may be—"

"Only a baron's younger son," interjected Raine. "Quite at the tailend, among the rag tag and bobtail. If I were a duke's son, or even my father's eldest son, there might be some sense in making a fuss—"

"I don't trouble myself with those distinctions," said Sylvia. "I consider Mary far above you in every way."

"Just what I have always said," cried Raine, delighted at finding his Mary properly appreciated. "I told Mrs. Tregellas so; I told my father so. I put it to him whether, as he couldn't make me a handsome allowance, I hadn't better take off my coat and go to work with a will, and take a wife who would help me instead of hindering me."

"There was common-sense in that."

"Oh, I have any amount of common-sense. But—can you believe me, Miss Luttrell—my father could not see it? Said Mary wouldn't be a fit companion for my sisters. As if I wanted to marry a companion to my sisters! If he wants a companion for them he can get one for thirty pounds a year. And, about education, too. If Mary is well educated enough for me, I should say that would do."

Sylvia came to the conclusion that Raine had as small an allowance of brains as had ever fallen to the lot of any man, and she almost repented having promised to help him. It was just such men as he, she said, who kept alive the wicked old British theory that a wife was a chattel. She wished Mary had had more discernment than to allow herself to become interested in such a creature.

But when she asked Mary to spend a day with her, Mrs. Ellacombe refused before the girl had a chance to speak, and Sylvia felt this to be such an instance of parental tyranny, that she was again on the side of Raine. Raine was by turns impatient and despairing, and was not very good company for his friends. Huish was gone to Florida to get rid of a cough which had fastened on him since the fever, so that the young man had not even the solace of a companion to whom he might descant on Mary's charms. It was only when Mrs. Ellacombe was laid up with an attack of influenza that Sylvia was able to redeem her promise to him. Mrs. Ellacombe had not chosen to send for the doctor herself, but when Mary, after a week of nursing, took

cold, her anxiety was such that she sent for the doctor immediately.

"Oh," she said, "I've lost six, and she is the last. And they all began with catching cold, doctor."

Dr. Bontecoe was peremptory in his orders. Mary was not to nurse, but to be nursed. She was not to enter the dairy for a month. She was not to get up before sun-rise. Mrs. Ellacombe's friends must come and help. If Mary could be taken away altogether for a little while, it would be the best thing for her. Prostrate with her illness and her anxiety for her child, Mrs. Ellacombe made no objection when Sylvia came in a covered vehicle to take Mary away. Only for a week or ten days at the farthest, she said, when Sylvia in her impulsive way offered to take Mary down to Florida.

"She shall look very different when I bring her back, I promise you," said Sylvia as she bade her good-bye.

And when Mary did return, there was a difference. Mrs. Ellacombe, who was still in bed, nursed by her friends in turn, thought that either Miss Luttrell was a wonderful nurse, or else Mary's constitution was stronger than she had supposed. It was Mrs. Macgregor who unwittingly explained the enigma. Mary would be dull at home without the billiard table, she supposed, and she wondered that Mrs. Ellacombe should not know already that Miss Luttrell had sent to Baltimore not long ago for a parlour billiard-table, and that Mr. Raine was there playing nearly every day. And was it not an engagement, after all? Mrs. Macgregor asked.

"There is no engagement, and there never will be," said Mrs. Ellacombe. She turned away from the light,

and Mrs. Macgregor, thinking she was asleep, left the room on tip-toe, little knowing the misery her words had caused. She creaked and rustled in and out of the sick-room, and the parlour, and the dairy, till Mrs. Tregellas came to take her place. It was in the afternoon, and Mrs. Tregellas was reading in her soft voice to the invalid, when Mary entered the room breathless and flushed, and with shining eyes, holding in her hand a couple of brace of quail. "Oh, mother," she cried, "see what Mr. Raine has brought you."

"I am sure I don't want them," said Mrs. Ellacombe irritably. "What do I want with those tiny little birds?"

"We had some at Miss Luttrell's, and they were so nice. She calls them partridges," said Mary.

"Partridges! I wish they were partridges. They are not worth the trouble of plucking."

"I won't mind the trouble of plucking them," said Mary.

"I don't want them. I'd as soon eat a robin red breast as one of those little 'Bob Whites.'"

"Mr. Raine thought you would like them."

"I don't know why he should have thought so."

"I must say something, I suppose. He wanted to know how you were."

"If Mrs. Tregellas would not mind speaking to him," said Mrs. Ellacombe.

Mrs. Tregellas rose at once, and expressed her willingness.

"Please thank him, and say I don't wish him to shoot any more of those little birds. And Mary need not go down again. You will know exactly what to say, I am sure."

Mary seated herself by the window. Mrs. Ellacombe looked at her and stifled a sigh. Could it be, she thought, that she was going to watch the young man as he rode away?

But before Edith had reached the parlour, Mr. Ellacombe had come in and seen Mr. Raine, and had sent his horse to the stable. This was what Edith had to tell when she came up stairs again.

"Of course he will stay to tea!" said Mrs. Ellacombe.

And Mary exclaimed that she must go and see about things, and she ran out of the room without asking what she must do.

"I don't know which way to turn," said Mrs. Ellacombe after a long pause. "Whatever I do, it seems to turn out the same."

Edith waited. Mrs. Ellacombe went on: "You don't think she is getting to like that young man?"

"I fear it may have gone beyond liking," said Edith.

"Oh, ma'am!—and I have been that careful!—I declare I have watched her, so anxious I've been to keep her and Mr. Raine apart. I do wish with all my heart he'd never set his foot inside my door. And I promised his lordship!—But you will stay and pour out the tea, and then Mary can stop up stairs with me. Do'ee now."

But Edith could not do that. Unless she were home before supper everything would be at sixes and sevens; and it was one of Mr. Garlick's bad days, and he wanted a little extra attention. There was nothing for it but that Mary must be down stairs and pour out the tea. Everything was going against her, Mrs. Ellacombe

thought, as she lay that evening listening to the two young voices in the parlour below. Mary brought her her tea, and offered to stay with her; but presently Mr. Ellacombe's voice was heard calling, and she went down stairs again. "One would think he did it on purpose," Mrs. Ellacombe said bitterly to herself. Improving conversation was Mr. Ellacombe's *forte*, but this evening there was little besides the sound of the two young voices with long intervals of silence, and Mrs. Ellacombe felt sure her good man was asleep in his chair. After an hour or longer, Mary returned, saying she was not going down stairs again. She stood by the fire as she told her mother of a splendid idea which had occurred to Mr. Raine. It was nothing less than for him to write a letter to the *Times* telling how Mr. Tregellas's land had had a lien upon it, which he had not known of when he bought it; and how he would have to pay both principal and compound interest.

"He says that numbers of English will be coming out next spring, and they ought to be put upon their guard," said Mary, "and I think so too."

"Don't you be mixing yourself up with writing to newspapers," said Mrs. Ellacombe. "If Mr. Raine likes to write, that is his business."

"I only told him a word or two when he couldn't find one to suit him," said Mary.

Mrs. Ellacombe said no more to her; but as soon as she felt well enough to speak without coughing she took her husband to task as severely as she dared for having asked Mr. Raine to tea. What would his lordship say?

Mr. Ellacombe defended himself feebly. "What was he to do," he asked, "when the young man brought birds that he had shot for her himself, and inquired so kindly after her?"

"Dear, dear," cried Mrs. Ellacombe, "that I should have such trouble with Mary!—With his birds and his kind inquiries! Don't'ee know 'twas all meant as a blind? And I promised his lordship there should be no courting."

"There was no courting," said her husband. "I was there myself 'most all the time."

"Yes; nodding in your chair by the fire."

"I tell'ee I was wide awake. I did feel myself going off once or twice, but I knew I should snore—at least you always say I do: and I thought that wouldn't be mannerly, so I took a turn in the passage to wake myself: and Mr. Raine was writing a letter most of the time, and Mary—she was sitting by the fire, and keeping herself pretty much to herself, as a young maid should. Of course they said a word now and then, just for manners, but 'twas all about the writing, as near as I could make out."

"Well," said Mrs. Ellacombe, "please Providence I'll be about in a day or two, and if he comes again, I'll give him the cold shoulder, manners or no manners. I shall just remind him of what his lordship said, and tell him we are much obliged, but we don't want his company."

Lord Raine was not only surprised but interested in the contents of his son's letter. He thought the letter, as a letter, was uncommonly good, and wondered why

his son should hitherto have kept such a talent so carefully hidden. Lord Raine did not know how much of the letter was due to Mary's murmured promptings. "If it does get printed," Raine had said to Mary, "my father will be sure to send me the paper, and I shall bring it to show you. It is a great deal more your letter than mine." This had been said while Mr. Ellacombe was walking up and down in the passage to keep himself awake. Before the old man had settled himself in his arm-chair with his newspaper, there had been ample time for a swift calculation of the days that must elapse before the letter could reach Lord Raine and return to Harmonia in the correspondence column of the great *Times*.

As there was no absorbing topic of public interest just then, it happened that not only was Raine's letter printed, but also a note from Lord Raine, describing his son as a settler in the Harmonia colony. Besides which, a few words were given in the body of the paper to the subject of the letter, which was held up as a warning to intending emigrants of gentle birth to honour British colonies with their preference, rather than a country where an insidious form of overreaching was protected by law. Raine paid but little attention to this paragraph. His letter—Mary's letter—was printed, and the first thing to do was to show it to her. The old woman would be by, of course. But fifty old women could not keep him from looking at Mary, nor Mary from smiling at him.

There had been rain enough to make it possible to plough, and Raine had made a promise to himself to

plough—by deputy or otherwise—a certain piece of ground before the end of the week. To-day his negro hand had wanted to go to the mill, and he had taken the plough handles himself, intending to remain steadily at work. But when he went to the house for a draught of water, he found his English mail, consisting of a copy of the *Times*, left good-naturedly by Mr. Macgregor. There was no more thought of ploughing after that. Raine hardly waited to eat his dinner, so eager was he to show the newspaper to Mary, with their joint composition printed *in extenso*, and looking so important, with his father's note above it.

Within half a mile of the house he was met by Mr. Ellacombe. He pulled the *Times* out of his pocket and flourished it. "By Jove! they have printed every word of it," he cried. "Is Miss Ellacombe at home? I thought she would like to see it, as she helped to write it. I hope Mrs. Ellacombe is quite well again."

Ever since Mrs. Ellacombe had spoken her mind to her husband, he had felt compunction at having all unwittingly put this well-meaning young man in a position to have an affront put upon him; and he wished to prevent this. Now, he thought, he could say a word which would keep him from putting himself in the way of Mrs. Ellacombe's displeasure. So he replied to Raine's question, that Mary was at home, to be sure; but there was no need of Mr. Raine taking the trouble to ride down. She was not much in the habit of reading the papers.

Raine said he was quite sure she would want to read this one. Indeed he had promised she should have it.

"Then," said the old man, "I will take the paper and save you the trouble of going."

"No trouble, but a great pleasure," said Raine.

"Don't you think," said the other, "that it is a pleasure you had better deny yourself?"

"No, I do not," Raine replied promptly.

"But I do, sir, and so does the missus; and if you go to the house, the missus will tell you so plainer than I do. To be sure, the missus looks at a thing in one way, and I look at it in another, but what odds is that if it comes to the same in the end?"

Raine smiled. "I am sure Mrs. Ellacombe will not be so unkind as to say 'not at home' to me."

"I don't know for certain what she will say; but I don't want any man's feelings to be hurt, much less yours, sir. And the fact is,—you are not your own man, Mr. Raine; and I can't treat you as if you were."

"What do you mean?" said Raine, who began to feel offended.

"When I pay a man, he's my man, and I expect him to go my way. Ain't that fair, now?"

Raine nodded.

"Well, then, as long as his lordship pays you so much *per annum*, call it by any name you like, you're his lordship's man. You are not your own master and you can't behave as such."

Raine was silent, and the old man continued:—

"And what's more, sir, the missus says that if we should make you welcome to our house, as I would dearly like to do, his lordship would take it very ill, and quite right too."

Raine tried to laugh. "In plain English, you forbid me your house. Well, frankness is a virtue, no doubt."

"Well, sir, would you consider what the missus's feelings would be if his lordship should cast it up to her that she had been doing anything underhand."

"I wish somebody would consider my feelings," said Raine.

"If it had pleased Providence to place you in our own walk in life"—Mr. Ellacombe began. But Raine turned round shortly and declared he would stand this sort of thing no longer. He would go straight home and write to his father, and tell him that he was going to marry Mary with his consent or without it. Mr. Ellacombe stared at him in slow wonder.

"My maid ain't one that will fly in the face of her parents," he began.

Raine laughed. "Don't you be too sure. I believe Mary is as fond of me as I am of her, only she dares not say a word. You are treating her cruelly and there ought to be a law against it. But there shall be an end of it one way or another, and so I give you fair warning."

As he spoke he put spurs to his horse and galloped back the way he had come. Mr. Ellacombe stood looking at him, and then walked slowly on, musing.

"If he'd said all that to Betsey, there'd have been words, as sure as a gun there would. Betsey don't consider that a young man has his feelings and should be treated conformable."

He said not a word at home about his encounter with Raine, and little thought what expectation was in his

daughter's mind all that afternoon and the next day, and the next day after that. For a whole week Mary went on expecting day after day to see Raine, and thinking at last that his letter could not have been thought worth sending to the *Times*, or else that, if Lord Raine had sent it, the wicked editor had thrown it into the waste-paper basket. Raine had told her that editors did such things now and then, even with letters written by men of rank. Mary had begun to take patience, because it was near Saturday and she would see Raine at church and he might have something to say about it, when who should walk in but Colonel Haverstock with a copy of the *Times* in his hand, containing the letter. The Colonel read it aloud to Mrs. Ellacombe and Mary, and they both thought it sounded very fine. The Colonel declared he had had no idea that Raine was so clever. What a pity it was he could not be in some line of life where his talent might be of use to him, instead of out here! There was such an art in putting things; he doubted whether Tregellas himself could have narrated the business of the lien so clearly and so succinctly. And then he read out a sentence as an illustration, and Mary looked out of window fearing lest her face should be a tell-tale, for she had suggested that sentence herself.

"I saw the young man ploughing yesterday," the Colonel remarked. "They say he is quite steady now; but still it does seem as if a man who can write such a good letter might be a diplomatist rather than a farmer."

He went away, leaving the paper for Mr. Ellacombe to read and send on to Mr. Macfarlane.

Mary went about in dumb misery for the rest of the day. If there was one thing she had been sure of, it was that if the letter got printed, Raine would bring her the paper to see. Her mother had been right after all when she said no man's word was to be trusted. Raine was no exception to the rule.

"It serves me right," said Mary to herself. "If I had done my duty and stayed up stairs with mother that evening, I should not be feeling like this now. But I'll never give him the chance of speaking another word to me."

On Sunday Raine put the *Times* in his pocket and went to church in good time, so as to be in his seat before the Ellacombes should enter. But early as he was, they were earlier still, and for a quarter of an hour he sat and contemplated the feather in Mary's best hat, hoping vainly that Mary might turn her head, if only for an instant. But the quarter of an hour passed, and then the harmonium tootled forth some uncertain sounds under Mrs. Bloss's trembling fingers, and Mr. Bloss walked in, his surplice as dingy and himself as bilious-looking as usual, and the service began. All Raine wanted now was that it should come to an end, and give him another opportunity of exchanging a glance with Mary behind Mrs. Ellacombe's broad shoulders. He would hand her the paper and would say a word in the little language and have a word in return. How many moods and tenses has that little language; how many cases! And has it not a dialect for each day

in the year? But to-day Mary walked out in front of her mother, with her head up and her eyes fixed on the bonnet of the lady before her, and when they reached the churchyard she was gone in a moment, while Raine was shaking hands with Colonel Haverstock, who came up to tell him how glad he was to see his letter in the *Times*, and how he hoped Tregellas's experience would be a warning to all future settlers. And would he not dine with them to-day? the Colonel asked. Raine accepted gladly. He had nothing to do anywhere, he told the Colonel, with a laugh which had something forlorn in it. Mary, who saw him move off in the Haverstocks' company, thought she understood why he had kept away lately. He had flirted with her as long as it amused him; now he was going to begin with Miss Haverstock. Some people had said Miss Haverstock was engaged to Mr. Trelease, but, as far as looks went, Mary did not believe it was so. But Miss Haverstock had the name of being a fast young lady who did as she pleased; and perhaps it was her pleasure now to be flirted with, though Mary had seen the day when she would not speak civilly to Mr. Raine.

If, after this, the girl went about pale and spiritless, it was not to be wondered at. Even Mr. Ellacombe remarked it. "What's come to 'ee?" he asked. "You are all in the dumps from morning to night; and you used to be as merry as a grig." Mary answered that she was growing old. She tried to laugh as she said it, but she wept when her father's back was turned. Her mother coming in, found her in tears. She asked anxiously what Mary was fretting about, and began to

weep herself when Mary declared it was nothing; she was not fretting—she was quite happy.

"You used to tell me everything, no matter what," said Mrs. Ellacombe. "I didn't use to have to ask you. You would come of your own accord." And she wept bitterly.

Mary's tears burst forth afresh. "Oh, mother, don't cry; it isn't worth it. I—I will get over it. You told me long ago how gentlemen went on, just making fun of girls, and if I had minded you——"

Mrs. Ellacombe wrung her hands. "That ever he should have darkened my door!" she said with a look of appeal to heaven.

"Don't take on so, mother," said the girl. "I will get over it."

Mrs. Ellacombe went out and ordered the buggy to be got ready, saying that she had business in Harmonia. She made light of Mr. Ellacombe's objections. It was not the regular day for going to Harmonia, and the barometer was falling, and the pony would be wanted to fetch cornmeal from the mill. She must go at once, she said, and if he wanted the cornmeal before she returned, one of the horses must be taken from the plough. She looked herself at the straps and buckles and drove off smartly, leaving the old man wondering what pressing business she could have in Harmonia on the wrong day.

As soon as she was on the Harmonia road, she turned down the lane leading to Raine's house. It was colder up here on the flat than in the little valley where she lived. The mountains were hidden by a bank of dense

cloud, and now and again a tiny snowflake dropped on her face, but she drove on fast, not heeding it. She had not come out without a definite purpose in her mind, but how to make herself clearly understood she did not yet know. She was not glib of speech, and had often wondered at the women who could get up and tell their experience in class-meeting. "But," she thought, "perhaps for once the Lord will put the right words in my mouth as I want them. And He knows 'tis not many I have to say."

Raine, who chanced to be putting up his horse, saw her, and hastened to help her to descend from the buggy. He brought her into his shabby, untidy living room, and piled wood and chips on the fire to make a blaze, wondering not a little what should bring her to his dwelling; while she for her part stood casting about in her mind how to begin the telling of her errand.

"Won't you sit down?" he said, in his usual winning manner. "I never knew it so cold here. I have been out, else I would have had a better fire to welcome you. Pray let me draw your chair close to the hearth. I was coming to see Mr. Ellacombe tomorrow on business."

Mrs. Ellacombe did not take the proffered chair. "I have no time to stay," she said in a husky voice, "and what I have to say I may as well say standing. You said you were coming to see Mr. Ellacombe on business. Mr. Raine, if you've the makings of a gentleman in you, you'll never come to our house again. You'll go away from here, and the farther the better; and you'll never come back any more. Don't look at me as if I was

mazed, for goodness knows 'tis little enough I ask after all the harm you've done."

Raine stared at her. "I don't know what you mean. I don't think I have ever done harm to anybody except myself."

"You think that?" said Mrs. Ellacombe. "Is it no harm to talk nonsense to a country maid like my Mary, and make her think you want to marry her, and go on with that game after his lordship had said it was to stop, and I had said it was to stop? And then—one fine day you're off, to begin the same game with someone else. Do you call that no harm? Lord, Lord, what can gentlemen's hearts be made of! It is fun to you, sir, I suppose. But it ain't fun to me nor to—anybody else."

By this time Raine was very angry. "You are Miss Ellacombe's mother, and you can say what you like; but, by Jove! if it were anybody else—I don't know what you mean by playing a game. As far as Miss Ellacombe is concerned, I have been in earnest from the beginning, and I am so still. I have just got a letter from my father, and he says—that was why I was coming to see Mr. Ellacombe. It is you, Mrs. Ellacombe, who have been doing harm all along, keeping Mary shut up as if she were a nun, just to prevent my speaking a word to her. I daresay you will be just as stiff and stubborn as ever, in spite of my father's letter. But the very day Mary is twenty-one, I'll take her away and marry her. I'll get the license all right, you bet, and the thing will be done." And Raine, who had emphasised his words by digging the

poker into the ashes, put it down, thrust his hands into his pockets and took his stand on the hearth with a defiant look at Mrs. Ellacombe.

She sank down on the chair which she had just declined, murmuring, "I can't make it out at all."

"I take up my stand, and I don't recede from it one inch," said Raine, leaning his shoulders on the mantelpiece; "particularly now that I have my father to back me."

Mrs. Ellacombe felt as if the room was turning round. "What did you say? His lordship——"

"He gives his consent, hampered with certain conditions; but still, it is a consent. You are the only one that stands in the way now."

Mrs. Ellacombe rose and went slowly to the door. Then she spoke, leaning against the doorpost: "I take back what I said when I came in, and I humbly beg your pardon——"

Raine ran to her and held her arm. "Heavens! she is going to faint," he cried, looking with alarm at her pale face. But Mrs. Ellacombe did not actually faint, though she was obliged to sit down for a minute. Then she rose and asked him to help her into her buggy. She only wanted to get home, and she hoped he would not bear malice for anything she had said. Yes, she would be obliged if Mr. Raine would kindly drive her home. Mary would be fretted if it began to snow before she got back. The child had been so pale and unlike herself of late that she had felt quite anxious about her.

"But you know it was all your fault," said Raine.

And that was the only reproach he ever addressed to her.

It was Cleopatra who saw the returning buggy first. She ran to Mary, who was making up a fire in her mother's room. "Oh, Miss Ma'y! Miss Ma'y! Dey's a-comin'. De ole lady done brung yo' boy back."

"Cleopatra!" was all Mary could say.

"Hit's de troof, I tell you. I done seen um outen de windah. Go 'long an' put on yo' bes' coat an' fix' yo' har right. Hit's 'ginnin ter snow good fashion, an' dey all be mighty nigh froze *tew* death. Oowhey! Hear him? He jes' gone in de pahlah; I 'llow he most tired quar'ling, an' he come coting jes' like in summer time."

"Hush, hush," Mary implored. "You do not know what you are talking about. It is nothing of the kind."

"Oh, go 'way, Miss Ma'y," said Cleopatra, with her coarse laugh. And then Mrs. Ellacombe entered the room. She was breathless with ascending the stairs quickly and with the change from the icy atmosphere without to the warm air of the house, and she sank down in the nearest chair, while Mary looked at her inquiringly.

"Mr. Raine is in the parlour, and wants to see you," was all she could say.

"Mother!" said Mary.

"There!—Go down, and don't keep him waiting. It is all right. Oh, I hope and pray it is all right."

"Mother, mother!" said Mary again.

"Oh, my lamb, my only one!" cried the mother.

"If ever he goes wrong after this—if ever he is unkind to you, I shall be ready to curse him and die." She lifted up her voice and wept aloud. But Mary was gone.

The conditions on which Lord Raine gave his consent to his son's marriage were as follows: the land was to be settled on Mary so that it could not be taken for her husband's debts; and he and she were not to come to England, under pain of forfeiting the yearly allowance, which Lord Raine increased to a hundred and fifty pounds a year. "Just as if I wanted to go to England," said Raine to Mary. "I shall never want to go unless you go. I think England a horrid place for a fellow that has not got lots of money."

Mary murmured that she thought they ought to do well with a hundred and fifty pounds a year.

CHAPTER XIV.

GONE!

IT was late in the afternoon of the previous day when the railway omnibus rattled along the street, containing as its sole passenger Mrs. Macfarlane. She descended at the Major's office, and ran up the steps. In a moment she appeared again. The office door was locked and a paper was stuck on it in Macfarlane's handwriting, "Gone to fetch the mail. Back directly."

She ran towards the post-office. She dropped her bag, her handkerchief, but did not stop to pick them up. Her hat and veil were all awry, and she cried out as she ran, addressing the bystanders: one or two of them followed her. Macfarlane was coming leisurely from the post-office with a handful of letters and papers, reading as he walked. His wife ran to him and clutched his arm. He looked up in amazement, uttering her name.

"Frankie!" was all she could say.

"Is the child ill?" he cried.

She made a motion of dissent, but could not speak. Macfarlane supported her to Dr. Bontecoe's house and

placed her on a chair in the surgery. She fainted away as the doctor came in, in answer to Macfarlane's ringing. As soon as she had regained consciousness, she again spoke the word, "Frankie."

"Gone," she whispered, "like Charley Ross. Homer's doing."

As soon as she was able to speak, this was the account she gave of the child's disappearance, as told by the Principal of Jonesville Academy.

A well-dressed stranger, wearing a good deal of jewellery and giving the name of Homer Slocum, had come to the Academy the day before Mrs. Macfarlane's visit, and had asked to see Frankie. He had given the child a gold watch and chain and a large box of candy, which Frankie had divided with his playfellows. He had begged a holiday for Frankie and another boy, and had taken them to see a travelling circus. Towards evening the boy had returned alone, bringing a note to the Principal, stating that the child Frankie was in the care of his father, and begging the Principal not to make himself needlessly anxious. The Principal had hurried to the hotel at which the stranger had put up, but he was gone. He hurried from the hotel to the station, to find the northward-bound train gone. Frankie had been recognised by a coloured porter, looking out of the window of a smoking-car. The note received by the Principal was signed "Homer P. Slocum;" but Mrs. Macfarlane declared that the signature in no way resembled the signature of her former husband. She had telegraphed to her lawyer, Mr. Paige, and had also written to him. There were but two mail trains per

day at Jonesville—one for the north, the other for the south.

Late at night, when at last the unhappy mother slept, Macfarlane came to Tregellas's door. Tregellas, who had been going round the yard, as was his custom, to see that all was snug the last thing, brought him into the parlour and mixed him a glass of grog. Macfarlane told his story, and finished by asking Tregellas to lend him enough money to go to New York and back.

"My wife is half crazy," he said. "She would not be asleep now, only the doctor gave me a draught which I persuaded her to swallow. She insists on my going to New York and employing Pinkerton to shadow the man Slocum. She seems to forget altogether that going to New York costs money, and that detectives cost money, and—I haven't got the money. You know the trouble we are in already, owing to the rascality of those divorce lawyers. The divorce will be heard next term, and there is no doubt, my wife's counsel says, of its being affirmed. But already the expenses have swallowed up every cent we have saved since our marriage. There is another thing Parthenia cannot take into consideration. I cannot go off in Forepaw's absence without asking leave. Were I to do so, it would be a good excuse for him to turn me off and get a man to do the work for less—times are so bad."

Tregellas said he would see what he could do. Macfarlane apologised for asking him, but said he knew not which way to turn. He promised to repay the money as soon as he could.

Edith was asleep, and Tregellas was obliged to look

in her pocket for the key of his cash-box, having long ago lost his own. While searching for it, his eye fell upon little Harry in his crib. He had tossed off the coverings, as healthy children will, and lay with his arms thrown wide apart and his golden hair, half hiding his face, in beautiful disorder.

Tregellas had been thinking how much he could venture to lend. He bent over the child's bed and kissed him. As he kissed him he made up his mind to let him have fifty dollars instead of thirty, the sum he had at first thought of. "Good heaven!" he thought, as he gently drew the covering over little Harry, "suppose it had been our child that had been kidnapped!"

He gave Macfarlane fifty dollars, which was what he had in his cash-box, and offered to look after his work while he was away. Macfarlane thanked him and went home, saying he would telegraph to the Major the first thing in the morning, and perhaps get his answer in time to go northward by the same day's train.

Tregellas got up early to see Macfarlane before he left his house, and take his instructions, if any, when he returned. Edith was seated at the breakfast table, with Mr. Garlick opposite and the child by her side, and Tregellas told what had taken place the night before. Edith had hardly been able to restrain her tears on learning what had befallen Frankie, and set out as soon as breakfast was over to see and comfort his mother. Mr. Garlick sat in a brown study long after she was gone. He had understood from a word let drop by her that her husband had given Macfarlane all he had in the house, and he was considering how he could

make it up to them, and did not see his way. For the Tregellases were as proud as they were poor, and Mr. Garlick was fearful of offending his friend's pride and losing his friendship. He was old enough to know, that though time has a cure for most things, and broken hearts mostly get mended, for a dislocated friendship there is no remedy. Edith was back sooner than she was expected. Mrs. Macfarlane had at the last moment accompanied her husband to the Junction to learn the result of the telegram to the Major. Colonel Haverstock had called a meeting at the hotel to discuss the best plan of helping the Macfarlanes, and all the inhabitants were requested to attend.

There was a deadly stillness in the air all day, with a leaden sky that heralded a snowstorm, but Harmonia kept itself warm with excitement and sympathy. Miss Priest had driven in to town to order a conveyance for the heavy luggage—for it was beginning to get cold, and Sylvia thought it was time to go down to Florida—and she returned with stray snowflakes clinging to her cloak and the traces of excitement on her usually expressionless face. She recounted with a thrill of sympathy the story of Frankie's disappearance and described the town meeting which she had attended. Macfarlane had got an affirmative answer from the Major and was gone on to New York, and she had met Mrs. Macfarlane returning home alone, and had accompanied her and remained a little while to cheer her up.

"I cannot say," Miss Priest remarked, "that I've ever been in sympathy with lynching as a form of retributive

justice, but if the people should ever get hold of Slocum and string him up, I don't think I should blame them."

"I cannot bear people to talk in that way," said Sylvia.

"I guess it was just irresponsible talk between old Boniface and Flippoto and some of the saloon loafers. It wouldn't amount to much even if Slocum were not a thousand miles away, which he is as likely as not. The English, of course, are all for law and order, and the old Colonel at the head of 'em. He'll be up pretty soon to-morrow with his subscription list. I said I guessed you'd want to give something. They've got up a committee, and they are going to telegraph to Pinkerton to send down one of his best men to Jonesville right away. 'A Friend' has put down his name for a hundred dollars. I guess the 'Friend' is Mr. Garlick."

Sylvia resolved she would give two hundred.

"That poor creature told me she hadn't got a nickel in the house."

Sylvia took out her pocketbook and began to count the greenbacks in it. "I will go to her to-morrow," she said.

"You need not bother about it," said Miss Priest. "I left her what I thought proper."

"That means that you have given more than you can afford," said Sylvia.

"Possible. Women don't have their children kidnapped every day. At least, I hope not."

Sylvia went to her writing-table and signed a blank cheque, which she put inside an envelope together with a

note to Mrs. Macfarlane, containing a few words of sympathy.

"There has been a slight feeling on Mrs. Macfarlane's side," she said, "as though she fancied I was not one of her friends. But I do not suppose she would refuse help from me—under the circumstances."

"Under the circumstances," said Miss Priest, "I presume she would take money from her worst enemy."

If anything could convince a woman of another woman's kindly feeling, thought Sylvia, surely a blank cheque would do it. If the morrow was fair, she would go and give it herself; if not, she would send it by the boy. And she would delay her journey for a few days in hopes of hearing some news from Pinkerton.

But when the morrow came there was a white whirlwind in the air; nothing was visible a yard from the windows. The negro sent to Harmonia to countermand the omnibus, did not return. Miss Priest would herself have gone forth in search of him, but he had been sent with the buggy, and even her brave spirit shrank from encountering the storm alone and on foot. All they could do during the day was to keep close, build up the fires, and be thankful that their persistent New England habit of foresight had so prevailed that the woodshed had been built close to the kitchen and was stacked up to its roof with billets of wood cut in August. There was not a native household so well prepared. This cold wave will long be remembered in that sunny region as the "big snow."

Miss Priest remarked that they might almost think

themselves at home. "Only it is sure not to last," she added regretfully. "At home now, we'd have three months' sleighing after this. Here, it will be all slush in three days. I must say I do like a country where the weather knows its own mind."

Even Edith, who was nearer Mrs. Macfarlane, could not venture out on such a day. Tregellas went to Harmonia and brought back the English mail, which consisted of a letter for Edith from her Aunt Rachel.

Aunt Rachel generally contented herself with sending her love through Aunt Elizabeth. Edith was surprised and touched when she found a cheque for a thousand dollars inside the letter. Aunt Rachel administered a severe rebuke to her niece for the sinful pride which had kept her from letting her relations know of the trouble she and her husband had been in because of the lien.

"I have not read the *Times* lately, because there is never anything in it. It was my maid who saw Lord Raine's letter and began asking me about it. I consider it a providential thing that she happened to see it before the paper was torn up. I have made the cheque payable to you, and you can do as you please with it."

Edith showed her husband the cheque, but not the letter.

"You will not mind my having it," she said, "though you are so proud?"

"I do not mind," he said. "I am glad to think that you will not have to practise such severe economy. Yet

it would have been pleasanter, to my thinking, not to owe so much to your aunt's kindness."

"You cannot expect to have everything your own way, any more than other people can. I would never have told the aunts about the lien, because it would have been tantamount to begging for help. But I do not mind taking the money as Aunt Rachel is kind enough to send it."

CHAPTER XV.

IN THE SNOW.

SYLVIA, looking at the white fury without, felt herself transported to her old home in the north. Her spirits rose, and she began to recall the delights of sleighing. She could send up north for a cutter, only before it could be packed and sent down, perhaps there would be a thaw. So far south as this, the snow was only a kind of transformation scene. It was impossible for it to last, she said, with a shade of regret; though it must be five feet deep by this time in many places where drifted by the wind. Miss Priest repeated the words "transformation scene" with an intonation full of scornful meaning. Such a thing as steady weather they did not possess down here, unless perhaps it was a drought. A nine weeks' drought was steady, she presumed. Sylvia laughed and declared she had never felt as well as during that nine weeks' drought; but Miss Priest maintained that the country was a fraud in which one got samples of every kind of weather.

"After this transformation scene as you call it, you see if everybody isn't down sick. And I do wish I knew where that trifling boy Jeff was with the horse *and*

buggy. He is as trifling a boy as ever I did meet with, but of course he is a human being though he don't always act like one, and I don't want any harm should happen to him."

Sylvia laughed and said she guessed the boy had sense enough to get into some shelter and stay there. And so the day wore on, and still the snow whirlwind filled the air. The flakes which had been so large at first, dwindled as the temperature grew lower, and the last time Miss Priest and Sylvia looked out all they could see was a whirling maze of white powder. The cook—her name was Lily, and she was very black—in the unaccustomed solitude of her kitchen strove to keep up her spirits by intoning hymns of such horrible dolefulness that at length Sylvia proposed having her in to spend the evening in the parlour. There she squatted in front of the fire and watched her mistresses busy at their needlework and their books; and by and by, being encouraged to talk, propounded a frightful theory for Jeff's non-appearance. She was sure that the boy had been drinking, and after the snow had melted he would be found somewhere by the roadside, frozen to death. Miss Priest asked, what of the horse and buggy? And to be sure black Lily had forgotten to take them into account. But she saw by the disturbed look that passed over the white ladies' faces, that her theory, though it might not hold water, had nevertheless occasioned them some uneasiness, and this filled her with as much delight as her negro mind was capable of receiving.

But the wind changed during the night, the storm blew itself out, and day broke over a glistening, silent

earth, with a sun rising in unaltered splendour in a cloudless sky. Jeff with the horse and buggy appeared shortly after breakfast, taking great credit to himself for his valour in having put the horse in the livery stable on his own responsibility, and having stayed where he could keep an eye on the horse. And he had horrible tales to tell of a belated teamster who had been found frozen on the top of his load at nightfall on entering the town, and of one man who had started out with his team to fetch a load of wood, and who had not been heard of since.

A little later, Sylvia, going out on the southern verandah, found a summer-like warmth, and heard the trickling drip drip of water from the snow already melting on the roof. It seemed impossible to remain indoors any longer with such a dazzling sky overhead she told Miss Priest. She would ride to Mrs. Macfarlane's and see how she was and perhaps stay there till the afternoon. Miss Priest saw for herself that Sylvia was well wrapped up, and insisted that she should put on a pair of sealskin mittens which she had kept for two years in her trunk without having needed them. Sylvia herself put the envelope containing the blank cheque she intended to give Mrs. Macfarlane safely in the inside pocket of her jacket, and set off attended by both the dogs, in spite of Miss Priest's insisting that one at least ought to stay at home to guard the house. They were the common curs of the country, with a trace of the foxhound in them. They had been bought as pups to act as watch dogs: the natives believing that a cur dog made a better guardian than any kind of dog except a fice. But Miss

Priest believed that instead of doing their duty they spent their nights away hunting on their own account, for nothing came amiss to them, coon, rabbit, or polecat ; and it was so strongly suspected that they had aided and abetted more than once in the harrying of Mr. Garlick's sheep, that Sylvia had felt that she was neglecting her duty towards her neighbour when she did not have them killed. But she had hesitated, and the curs had lived on and had justified their existence since, as before, by barking at human beings of every shade of colour who approached the house when they happened to be there.

To-day they seemed to lose their heads entirely at the prospect of going on an excursion. A cur knows when his master is only going for a stroll round the plantation, and when he is going to make a visit, quite as well as a dog of the highest family : and, as well as mere human creatures can judge, his enjoyment of the outing is far greater ; he has never learnt to control himself and stifle his emotions as a dog of high descent must. These curs after a round of violent barking at Sylvia's horse, rushed hither and thither, rolled in and out of snow banks, and came to sudden stops before fresh rabbit tracks. Then they rushed off towards the woods in search of an imaginary quarry, and could not be recalled by the shrillest notes of Sylvia's whistle. Sylvia rode on, expecting to find them on the other side of the hill. She had chosen the shortest road to Mrs. Macfarlane's, and it took her very near a gully which she had always looked upon as a source of possible danger. She had spent a great deal of money in having waggon loads of stones picked off the hillsides and

thrown into the deepest part. She had watched the work as it went on, and had felt disappointed when she had spent forty dollars in wages, to see how small a difference all those waggon loads seemed to make in the depth of the chasm. She might perhaps have spent another forty dollars, but the negro labourers had chosen to strike for higher pay; and Sylvia, knowing that if she submitted to their demands, she would raise a feeling of ill-will in the breast of every employer in the neighbourhood, had contented herself with having a fence made on the side where the negroes from the Quarters had made a short cut across her land. Sometimes she had met white people using this same track: dwellers in the log cabins scattered among the hills, who tried thus to save their steps when they went to Harmonia to make their poor little purchases. She had felt indignant at first that her fences should be damaged and tracks made across her land, but that was when the sense of proprietorship was new. When she saw them pass: now a girl, now a boy, then perhaps a sad-eyed woman with a baby and a group of barefooted children straggling behind, with the little baskets and buckets that showed how little they had to sell and how little to buy, she felt so full of pity for them that an impulse had seized her more than once to compel them all to come into her house and feast. Perhaps she might have carried her impulse into execution but for Miss Priest's steady opposition. She had entreated the mothers—also in opposition to Miss Priest's advice—to forbid the children taking the track directly beside the gully. If they must come that way, let them keep by

the foot of the hill; it scarcely made the walk a hundred yards longer. Miss Priest had said no one would thank her for the advice, and no one would follow it; and Miss Priest had been right. Mothers and children, blacks and poor whites, all continued to use the track by the gully.

To-day Sylvia was going to use it herself; but of course there was a difference. Every foot of earth there was hers, and it was broad daylight, and she knew what she was about. She went on, thinking how much had happened since last summer, and how strange it was that she should actually regret having to leave Harmonia; a place where nothing agreeable had ever happened or could happen.

There was something exhilarating in the atmosphere: the sun was getting hotter every moment; the wide expanse of snow shone so that she was obliged to turn away her eyes from it; the snow-bird sat on the ends of the branches where the snow had melted, and uttered its plaintive little note; a flock of young crows were winging their way from the clump of pines on the hillside to the neighbouring wood. Turkey buzzards sailed in solemn circles overhead, with a deliberation and dignity befitting eagles rather than carrion birds. Sylvia took in all these surroundings as she rode on, and said to herself that surely it was not for nothing that nature—as nature—had such supreme charms for her. Even a turkey buzzard—at a sufficient distance—had its own charm, and appeared as a fitting adjunct to a lovely landscape. There were three of them on the wing a little way off; they were circling now in narrow circles, now in wide,

coming low enough for her to hear the swish of their wings, and then mounting again upwards till they looked no bigger than pigeons. It was like an ordered ethereal dance with a recurring figure, this narrowing, widening circle, now nearing the earth, now ascending as if it would reach the portals of heaven.

When she had ridden as far as the other side of the hill, she stopped for a moment to make sure of her position, for the snow had changed the shape of everything so much that she thought it possible she might take a wrong turning. But she found the fence; she was sure of that because of the broken-down panel where the blacks and poor whites had asserted their illegal right of way. The lower rails were intact, but the two upper ones had been thrown out by some one too old perhaps to climb them, and too lazy to replace them after passing through. Sylvia was conscious of a sensation of contempt for the country which contained citizens so little instructed in the first duties of citizens; this sensation would often thrill across her liking for the place and her toleration for the people's shiftless ways, and affected her disagreeably, as though it accused her liking of being a sham, which it was not.

She went on carefully, for the track was obliterated, and the snow had drifted in one place so that the gully presented a surface level with the rest of the land. She would have ridden into it but for the scattered line of trees on its margin; notably a wild apple tree which grew from the bottom, and whose branches spread over the ground at the top so that there was not space for any but a tiny child to pass under, and the track per-

force made a bend. She heard whines and occasionally a short bark, and presently one of the dogs rushed up the bank of the gully and came towards her and ran back again.

"You won't catch that ground hog to-day, my friend," she said and once more put the whistle to her lips. The dog which had run up to her again appeared at the sound of the whistle, followed her a few steps and ran back again. She stopped her horse for a moment and listened. She could hear the other dog in the gully; it seemed very far down, from the muffled character of the sound; now a whine and now a short impatient bark. She turned back. It might be that he had slipped down into the soft snow where it lay deep and he could not get out. If it were so she did not know what could be done for him. He was the most utterly brainless cur she had ever had anything to do with; still, she could not bear the idea of leaving him to his fate. So she called and tried to encourage him with her voice: making a mental vow to herself as she retraced her steps that if she did come back to *Harmonia* she would have a couple of properly trained dogs, dogs that were dogs and knew their duty, even if she had to send to New York for them. Once again as she advanced, the older dog clambered up the gully and came towards her and then went back as though yielding to the supplications of his companion.

Sylvia advanced cautiously and leaned over on her saddle as much as she could without losing her balance. Here the actual depth of the gully was about ten feet, with a width at the bottom of six or seven, but these

proportions were altered by the snow which had drifted in to the depth of about four feet. She saw one dog, and heard the other whining and scratching. Then all at once recurred to her the story Jeff had brought back from town of the man who had gone to get a load of wood and had not been seen since.

No man could have come out here on such an errand yesterday, for the reason that all the fire-wood beyond what she required for herself had been already carried off the ground. But it was possible—barely possible—that some poor negro child from the Quarters had been sent on an errand; or a man even, might have been out on a frolic, and had been belated, fuddled, very likely, with the mixture of fusel oil called whiskey which the negroes bought to drink at these frolics. She called out, “Anybody down there?” and her own voice came back to her from the hillside opposite.

The dogs were still scratching, and Sylvia, bending over, thought she caught a glimpse of something red; the red of the dogwood leaf when it falls in late October. But no dogwood leaf could have kept its colour so long. There was but a single glimpse of the red colouring, and then the snow covered it, thrown up by the other dog. This all happened in a moment. Again Sylvia called and received no answer; and then with the feeling that she would rather take any risk than pass that spot unsatisfied, she slipped from her saddle and was instantly knee-deep in snow. She could hardly forbear a little cry when she felt the icy coldness of it, but she managed to draw her habit up over her arm and edge herself out of the soft bank to the place

where the dogs running up and down had trampled it so that there was a firm footing. She could see nothing now, except that the snow was discoloured by the dogs' feet and that they had scratched out dead sticks and leaves. She sat down and put her feet over the bank, and felt for a foothold. At the same moment the youngest dog dragged from under the snow a fragment of something red and began to worry it. Sylvia felt no more for a foothold. She let herself slip from the top of the bank and called the dog to her, catching him by the neck as soon as she could reach him. The fragment of red which she took from his mouth was the corner of a knitted shawl. She felt herself turn sick with apprehension; it seemed to her as if she had seen that shawl before. She began to dig the snow with her hands and encouraged the dogs to go on digging. She felt the branches of a dead tree and tried in vain to pull them towards her, for the dogs were getting excited and sniffing as if they had found something. At last, pulling with all her might, a branch snapped off, and threw her backwards into the soft snow. She lost her breath for an instant but she had had a glimpse of something; something which she had partly recognised as she had the shawl, and which filled her with such dread that she hardly felt the chill of the snow into which she had fallen. She got back—how she never knew—to the spot where the snow had been trampled hard by the dogs' feet. She blew her whistle as soon as she felt herself standing firmly; twice, thrice, and, slipping down again, began to dig with her hands.

There was a human creature there, she knew so

much : she had seen under the tree just as the branch broke, about a hand's breadth of woollen material like a cloak.

At last she caught hold of it and pulled it out a little way, but to pull what it enveloped was beyond her. She felt her strength diminishing ; she felt the cold chilling her limbs ; it seemed as though she had a weight on her forcing her to sit down. She raised her voice in an ineffectual shriek ; the high banks on each side seemed to damp all the sound. Once more she whistled. The horse had wandered off : her only hope now was that he might go straight to his stable, and so give the alarm.

She redoubled her efforts, and broke off another branch, and in one second more, half buried in the snow, she saw a huddled heap which she recognised as Mrs. Macfarlane and her youngest child.

The child was tightly clasped in its mother's arms. It was breathing, but the mother was pallid as marble. She had been lying on her side, face downward, and her clothing had helped to keep the snow off the child. Sylvia put forth her last remaining strength in her efforts to turn her with her face to the light. She pulled off her own jacket and mittens, and wrapped up the child, and then hoping against hope, she tried all she knew to bring back life to the mother. Her efforts were mechanical ; as the minutes passed she felt a numbness stealing over her, and her feet were as cold as ice ; she would have liked to sit down and rest. Shadows flitted above her like clouds before the sun. She looked up. The turkey-buzzards were sitting in

a row on the outermost branch of the apple-tree, and seemed to be watching her. A thrill of horror ran through Sylvia; she redoubled her efforts, she took more snow in her hands and rubbed the corpse-like face. She thought she detected some colour in the skin. Was it fancy? Her medical knowledge told her it was. Then another shadow stood between her and the sunshine above, and she heard a shout and tried to answer, but found she had no voice left.

"It's Miss Luttrell. Good Lord-a-massy!" said the voice of Thomas Rosevear.

CHAPTER XVI.

HER LAST LETTER.

THE next thing Sylvia knew, she was lying on the sofa in Edith's parlour, in an atmosphere heavy with the fumes of camphor, ammonia, and brandy. She moved, and the person who had been standing by the window came towards her. It was Mr. Garlick. He took her hand and put his finger on her wrist. "You are coming round," he said gravely.

Sylvia whispered "Mrs. Macfarlane?" He shook his head; "They are doing what they can; Mrs. Tregellas is with her. I hope you do not mind my being left to take care of you; Thomas is gone for the doctor, and Tregellas is gone to fetch Miss Priest."

"How long have I been here?" Sylvia asked.

"About an hour."

"And no sign of life yet?"

He shook his head.

"She was dead when I found her," said Sylvia. "I did what I could, but I knew it was no use. And the child?"

"Dead," he said in a low voice.

She shuddered and hid her face. Presently she said, still in a whisper, for the cold had taken away her voice—"I wish to see her—to know if they are doing right."

"I wish you would take my word for it," he said.

"I must see for myself." She rose, steadying herself by the sofa; but she could scarcely stand, and it was only with the help of his arm that she dragged herself to the room where lay side by side the forms of Mrs. Macfarlane and her youngest child. She gave one glance and said to Edith, "No one can do anything," and then she let Mr. Garlick lead her back to the sofa.

"I went out this morning," she said, "intending to do her a kindness, and now she will never know it."

"As long as I have known you," said Mr. Garlick, "you have been doing kindnesses."

She shook her head. "I might have been kinder than I was—to her. I do not think she knew that I was unkind, at all; but I was not as kind in my thoughts as I might have been. I hoped and wished to make up for it, and now I never can."

Mr. Garlick thought she was overcome with the horror of the situation. "You did everything you could," he said. "You endangered your own life. When I saw them bringing you in——" But he stopped himself and went and stood by the window. He came back presently and said:—"I hope you are not offended."

"Offended? I? When you have been so kind?" Sylvia felt her whisper to be so inadequate that she put out her hand. He took it and kissed it, and just then Edith came in.

On the third day after this, Mr. Macfarlane came back from New York. No one had known where to find him, and all that could be done was for Tregellas to look out for him at the station, and break the news gently. He was very quiet and self-contained: only one word of sorrowing escaped him when he had visited the chamber of death:—

“She always met me with a smile.”

In the pocket of the dead woman they found a pocket-book with a cutting from a New York paper, containing notices like the following:—

“Astrology.

“Mme. Petrucci.—Business clairvoyant and medium. From Paris. All affairs. UNITES THE SEPARATED. Tells everything.—\$1 50c.”

There were others, but this one was outlined in pen and ink, and the words “unites the separated” were under-scored.

In the little parlour, which she loved to make so pretty, they found a letter addressed to her husband, which explained in some degree by what sad mischance she had come to her end.

“MY DEAREST JIM,—

“I HAVE thought of something that I can do which may be of use, and I cannot rest till I do it. I know that Frankie has been kidnapped, because Homer thinks to bring me to my knees through my anxiety about him. I know that Homer and my forty thousand dollars are at the bottom of it, as well as

if he had told me so himself. I am going to try and find out Homer. There may be still people in Equity who know something of his whereabouts, and I am going to offer to deed him every cent of that money, if he will let me have Frankie back. I wish I had thought of it first. It is a better plan than having Pinkerton. Pinkerton and all his men never got a clue to Charlie Ross.

"I am sure you will say I am right. What do you want of grandpa's forty thousand dollars? We have done mighty well without them, so far, and I don't see why we should not go on doing without them.

"I have enough money to take me there and back. Kind Miss Priest gave me some. If I cannot find out anything about Homer's whereabouts, so as to send him a telegram, I have thought of another way. But this way seems the surest, and I shall try it first.

"I shall leave baby with Mrs. Tregellas; I know she will not mind the trouble of him till I get back.

"I will be back as soon as ever I can. I know what you will feel like, dear Jim, when you get home and don't find me there, only this letter. Dear, dear, *dear* Jim, don't you think but that I am coming back. Don't you think that anything Homer may do will keep me from coming back. You are my husband, and Homer cannot alter that, smart as he thinks himself.

"If I do not get back, you may be pretty sure Homer has put me in a lunatic asylum. But I shall be very careful (if I do go to Canada) not to trust myself to see him without witnesses. I shall go to Mr. Paige's first, and ask him to go with me, or else let me have one of

the clerks. I believe I have fixed everything right, and I hope to be back on Saturday. Good-bye, till then, from your own little wife,

“PARTHENIA MACFARLANE.”

The servants testified at the inquest that their mistress had ordered the buggy horse to be fed earlier than usual the next morning, and that the buggy was to be brought to the door at “sun up,” as she wanted to catch the earliest northward-bound train that stopped at the Junction. In her room was a bag already packed and locked. The theory was, that she had set out with the child, not having any idea of the temperature or the force of the wind, till she got to the top of the hill. That when she had gone on a little way, finding herself unable to face the storm she had turned back, had taken the wrong turning, and had wandered on and on till she fell, or perhaps was hurled by the violence of the wind, into the gully. The last was most probable, since a terrific blast must have broken the dead tree which covered her with its branches, and which must have fallen directly on her, before enough snow had fallen to cover her.

They carried her to her grave a few days later, amid the sunshine and the twittering of the birds and the balsamic odour of the pine woods. The snow was gone except in the hollows and shady places, and the wind blew warm from the south.

They laid her with her child to rest on a quiet hillside a little way from her house; and there they will lie yet awhile with the flowers she loved blooming as

the seasons come round, and shedding pale petals over her and her little one as the spring winds drift them by.

Sylvia, who had taken everything into her own hands as if the dead had been her sister, dragged herself to the funeral by sheer force of will. All Miss Priest's advice, all Edith's entreaties, fell on deaf ears.

"You do not realise how I feel about it," she said. "What I do now is all I can do for her: and when I think how little that is, and how much I intended to do when I set out on that dreadful morning, it is almost more than I can bear. I liked her,—oh yes, I liked her,—with restrictions. Now she is gone I know that I ought to have loved her."

"I loved her," said Edith, "but I did not love her enough."

This was the verdict Edith and Sylvia passed on themselves. But those who saw them bowed down with grief before the dead enshrined in costly flowers, said of the two friends that such love was hardly to be seen in women for a woman friend.

After this, Sylvia was ill for a long time. It was partly owing to the cold, the doctor said; but mostly in consequence of the shock and nervous exhaustion. She lay in her bed, too weak to care much whether she lived or died. There were silent goings to and fro, and sometimes the doctor's face appeared, and sometimes the face of Edith, of Eliza Rosevear, of Miss Priest. She seemed to hear voices in the night, very far away; and days and nights intermingled strangely, and at last, time went by unmarked by any sound. It was as if her bed were her

grave, and she was outside and beyond the world ; shut off by an invisible barrier from the living faces which appeared now and again, with smiling lips always, but eyes that were mournful, and features that were pale and anxious. But there came a day when life stirred within her once more, and days and nights and seasons ceased to be blurred and indistinguishable. The young think it easy to die, but it is hard ; doubly hard when spring and spring odours fill the air. When the water-courses are alive with the frogs' crisp, castanet-like note, and the birds are coming back from the far south to seek their summer lodgings : when billing and trilling and nest-building are the day's work in every bush and tree, and the rough places are gay with Indian pink, and azalea and hearts ease. It was on such a day as this that Sylvia asked the hour, and wondered why she never heard the hall clock strike. Soon after she had asked the question there was a sound of some one winding up the clock ; and before long it struck, first in ludicrous variance with the time of day, then, after successive strikings, a solemn " One," after which it was silent.

There was a slight movement outside, and Miss Priest came in. " You are sure you don't mind it ? " she asked. Sylvia answered that she was glad to hear it. Had she been deaf all this time ? Everything had seemed so still, and voices had sounded so far off. She had not even heard the dogs. Then Miss Priest explained that during her illness her sense of hearing had been so painfully acute that they had stopped the clocks, and that the dogs had been sent away.

"And the voices I seemed to hear? But perhaps it was a noise in my head. It sounded like men's voices," said Sylvia.

Miss Priest answered that she might have heard Dr. Bontecoe and Mr. Garlick talking.

"Came to inquire how I was?"

Miss Priest nodded in reply.

"Did he come often?"

"Pretty often."

"But sometimes I seemed to hear a man's voice in the middle of the night," said Sylvia.

"I wouldn't talk much, Sylvy," said Miss Priest.

A few nights later, Sylvia had just awoke from a refreshing nap. She had been placed on a sofa that afternoon, and had asked to be wheeled into the sitting-room by Miss Priest and the boy Jeff. She had not seen Jeff because Miss Priest had thrown a light shawl over her for fear of a draught; but she had thanked him very sweetly from under the shawl, and she had wondered a little at his making no reply, as well as at his going out so softly, and not slamming the door behind him. The coming into the sitting-room was quite an event, and she had insisted on returning to the bedroom holding by Miss Priest's arm, and had felt no worse for it. Now as she woke from her nap, she heard Miss Priest say "Good-night and thank you;" then there was a murmured reply, the shutting of the front door, the clanging of the gate, and the receding sound of horse's footsteps on the Harmonia road.

When Miss Priest came in, Sylvia asked who had left the house just now.

"Mr. Garlick," Miss Priest said laconically.

"Is it not late?" said Sylvia.

"Not so very late."

"It seems as if Mr. Garlick were always here," Sylvia remarked.

"Well, he's gone now," was Miss Priest's rejoinder.

It was not till some days after this, that Sylvia learnt that Mr. Garlick had stayed in the house, and had even sat up for some nights in the parlour during her illness.

"I do not think that was necessary," said Sylvia, with a flush of vexation. "If you were obliged to have some one, why not Lily's father?"

"Everything was done for the best, Sylvy. You may be sure of that."

"Yes, I know. But why——"

"You see, when we were forced to send away the dogs because their noise distracted you so, I was bound to have some one here on whom I could depend. Spring was coming, and tramps always find out if a house has only women-folk; and besides there are bad negroes down at the Quarters. Then there were one or two nights when I did not know but I might have to send for the doctor. And if I had, and Mr. Garlick had not been here, I must have gone myself; for that boy Jeff was too much afraid of 'hants' to stir past the gate after dark. And old Uncle Zen was worse than Jeff."

"Well, if it was a comfort to you——"

"It was a very great comfort to me," said Miss Priest with emphasis. "And it was a comfort to him, if you won't mind my saying so."

"I should like to thank him," said Sylvia. "Let

me see him the next time he comes, please." Then she turned her face from the light and slept.

Mr. Garlick came one day soon after. She was in the parlour, but still wrapped up, and there was a fire; though the windows were thrown open and she could watch the humming birds hovering over the tulip beds, and a pair of Baltimore orioles weaving their nest at the end of a beech-tree's lowest branch.

Mr. Garlick did not say much at first; he laid a bunch of wild iris on the table beside her, and let her look at them.

"I owe you many thanks," she said at last. "Pray believe that I am not ungrateful."

"What I did, I did because I liked; because I couldn't help doing it," said he. "You owe me nothing."

There was another pause, which was broken by his remarking that he supposed she would be going to Florida soon.

Sylvia said she didn't know. It hardly seemed worth while; but she supposed she should go if Miss Priest wished it.

"I am glad," said he, "to hear of your doing something, because somebody wishes it."

Sylvia tried to laugh. To change the subject she asked after Mr. Denning. Mr. Garlick became grave as he answered that Mr. Denning was growing visibly weaker. He was cheerful, clear as to intellect, but—

"I shall miss him," he said after a pause. "I knew him when I was a boy. I do not think there is any one left who is so old a friend as he."

"I shall miss him," said Sylvia, "though he is a new

friend to me. There is something I want you to do for me," she said, after another pause. "I want you to ask Mr. Macfarlane, when you think it a proper time to do so, whether he would wish a stone placed over his wife's grave. And if so, beg him to let me do it. Oh! I would put a monument of gold over her if I could!—"

Mr. Garlick thought she had not lost any of her intensity, but he made no reply to her last remark. "I will do what you wish if you would prefer my speaking."

"Oh," she said, with a shudder, "I could not see him, and I am sure he will never want to see me again. Have you forgotten? It was on my land that it all happened. That horrible gully! Even now, when I wake suddenly, it seems to me as if I were down there trying to dig away the snow from her."

"The sooner you get away from here the better," said Mr. Garlick.

Sylvia reflected. "That is what I should say to any one else. But it seems such a trouble to move. I do not believe I have a grain of common sense left."

He looked at her with a grave smile. Then he said:—"Do not be morbid as regards Macfarlane. Remember that he did not see all as you did. I do not know that the precise particulars have been told him, or that he has asked for them. I believe that he accepts the inevitable; though he sorrows, and will sorrow for a great while. But, tragic as it all was, perhaps it was better so."

“Better?” Sylvia repeated.

“Yes; though one would not have chosen such a terrible ending. But he feared that her anxiety for her child would throw her mind off its balance; and how terrible that would have been!”

Sylvia could not but assent.

“And he begins already to look back at the time when they were very happy; for they were happy, there is no doubt of it.”

“Yes,” said Sylvia, “I have felt sometimes as if it were all a mistake that she should have died while here I am alive. She seemed to have some place, some work in the world, even if things had got into a wretched tangle with her, while I don’t seem to have any place worth having, or any work that signifies. I have done things, of course, but they don’t amount to anything. I might as well have left every one of them undone. Of course, I intend to go on trying, and perhaps I shall finish by doing something—or being something—that is worth while.”

“I think I understand. That is the kind of feeling which makes women in some countries fly to convents, to their ultimate bitter repentance in most cases no doubt.”

“No fear of my entering a convent,” said Sylvia. “I know better than that at any rate.” She tried to speak gaily.

Mr. Garlick took up the bunch of irises and rearranged them.

“There is plenty of work for you in this world,” he said. “Work enough to last you a life-time.”

"Of course there must be. Oh, don't think I shall give up trying."

"Yes," he went on "there is a place for you, and there is work. But you are perverse; you are worse than perverse, you are —— stupid! Against such stupidity the gods themselves fight in vain."

"Oh!" Sylvia breathed. He had risen as he spoke, and he threw the bunch of irises down on the floor.

"You make a man fall in love with you, and ask you to be his wife, and you refuse. But what for? You will not stoop to married life. Out upon your New Athens education; if that is what it has taught you, Sylvia, I wish to Heaven you did not know how to write your name!"

"Do not blame New Athens," cried Sylvia, finding her voice. "You do not understand, and I do not know how to explain. I—— I—— thought it was better not. I wished to do the right thing." She covered her face, and the tears began to trickle through her fingers.

He knelt down before her. "Do you know what I was thinking when you were ill? I was thinking, constantly: 'If she had but let me love her for one day, to have had that day of love to look back upon, would have been some help to bear the parting.'" He rose and began to walk up and down. "Yes, there was your work, Sylvia Luttrell. But you would have none of it."

"Don't be so angry," Sylvia implored.

But he went on, "If you had liked some one else——"

"But I did not like anybody."

"And you won't like me."

"Yes, I do—a little," she murmured.

"You acknowledge so much? Then there's your work, staring you in the face, and you won't do it."

"Yes, I will, if you won't scold me any more," said Sylvia.

CHAPTER XVII.

WEDDINGS.

IT was growing dark, one evening a little later in spring, when various vehicles passed swiftly up the street and stopped with one accord at Mr. Denning's door.

Mrs. Bloss in the midst of her anxiety lest the biscuit and waffles should be ready before Mr. Bloss came in to supper, nevertheless could not help craning her neck out of the window to see whither these conveyances might tend. When the rector appeared she told him Mr. Denning must be having a surprise party.

"If they'd give us a surprise party, there would be some sense in it," she remarked.

If it was a surprise party, it broke up very soon, for the rector and his wife had not risen from the supper table before the same vehicles were heard going back the way they had come.

The next day the town was in a buzz with a delightful bit of news, which Mrs. Bloss heard as she was at the grocery buying a pound of sugar. She had had to buy several pounds of sugar lately: and she had made up her mind that she would call on Miss Luttrell shortly

and introduce the subject of sugar. It was a long time since Miss Luttrell had made a donation of sugar. She had been ill, to be sure, and it could not have been expected that during her illness she should think of the needs of the minister's household. But she must be well by this time, for the doctor had ceased his visits.

The postmaster handed the pound of sugar over the counter, and then propounded the riddle :

"Six people entered a room, three came out, and yet none were left behind."

Mrs. Bloss declined the solution of it. Riddles always gave her the headache.

The postmaster's face was creased all over with smiles as he gave her the solution. "Man and wife are one. Mr. Denning married three couple last night, so if six people went into his parlour, only three came out."

"Who were they?" snapped Mrs. Bloss.

The postmaster told her Mr. Garlick had married Miss Luttrell, Mr. Trelease had married Miss Haverstock, and Mr. Raine had married Miss Ellacombe. Mrs. Bloss opened her eyes and her mouth wide as the names were uttered.

"I can't believe it!" was all she could say.

But it was true for all that.

Mr. Garlick had said to Sylvia, "Now that we understand each other, what is the use of waiting? Have you not kept me waiting long enough?" And the same line of argument was adopted by the other lovers. And then they asked, "Would it not be nice if dear old Mr. Denning would marry them?"

Mary had taken it for granted that she was to be married in church; but a very few words from Raine convinced her that it would be best to be married by Mr. Denning at his own house, when he married the other quartette. In the first place, people did not of necessity go to church to be married in this country: in the second place he did not wish to be married by such a cad as Bloss.

"Is he a cad?" said Mary. Mr. Bloss was not a very nice gentleman, to be sure; still, she thought her future husband rather severe.

"My dearest girl, can't you see it yourself?" cried Raine. "He cannot open his mouth without showing what a cad he is. Now Mr. Denning is very old-fashioned, but he is a gentleman."

"Oh, yes," said Mary.

"Of course, if you particularly wish Bloss to officiate—"

"Oh, no!" cried Mary.

After that Mrs. Ellacombe's arguments in favour of being married in church were hardly listened to. "William wishes Mr. Denning to marry us," said Mary, in a tone that was meant to be conclusive.

Mrs. Bloss was greatly disturbed by the news of the marriages, and when the rector heard, he also was disturbed. Here were straws enough, and more than enough, to show which way the wind was blowing!

"What are you going to do about it?" said Mrs. Bloss.

Mr. Bloss shook his head. As a man, he explained

to his helpmeet, he was not hurt: he had no right to be hurt. As minister, he was insulted. He had been deliberately set aside as if he were of no account in the parish.

"I should like to know," said he, "whether these Oxford men,—these Cambridge men,—with their carnal learning and their degrees—are one whit more consecrated than I?"

"I wouldn't give *that* for their consecration," said Mrs. Bloss, snapping her finger and thumb. "I wonder there shouldn't be a law to keep these English ministers from shoving aside our own ministers like this. The House of Bishops ought to take the matter up, and if I were you I'd write to Bishop Thrasher."

"Ah," said Mr. Bloss, "I fear Bishop Thrasher would not thank me for writing to him. He is getting too old for his position, and it is time he made room for a man with more energy. But something I ought to do. There are limits, even in turning the other cheek. If I do not magnify my office, who will magnify it for me?"

"Putting this and that together—I mean their asking Mr. Trelease to bury Mrs. Macfarlane instead of you—"

"But I was glad of that," said the rector candidly. "I told you at the time, Araminta, that it saved me from a most awkward dilemma. It must have been known that I had signified to her my disapproval of the course she was taking, and though, to be sure, there had been no formal excommunication—the times being so sadly lax—and I might perhaps have stretched a point under

pressure ; yet I was well pleased not to be called upon to do so."

"It don't matter what you felt. It was their business to come to you. What's the rector for any way ? "

"What indeed !"

"Well, Mr. Bloss, let me tell you this setting you aside is just getting to be systematic. And I had to buy sugar again this morning."

Mr. Bloss took a turn up and down the room.

"If I could hear of anything better—"

"Oh, la !—If we could but get back to the city— ! I do think life in the country is a no-account sort of life, anyway."

"I should like to talk with Major Forepaw. I do not want to do anything rash, of course. I wish he were back."

Mrs. Bloss suggested that he should be written to. Mr. Bloss feared that would be no good, for the Major was known to have a habit of never answering letters. They agreed that something would have to be decided, since Easter was not very far ahead. When Easter week had come without bringing the Major, Mr. Bloss did write a letter, in which he asked the Major's opinion as to the probability of an intention to raise his salary. This time the Major replied with great promptness, that, as far as he knew, there was no intention on the part of the parishioners to raise the rector's salary.

This decided Mr. Bloss.

"I will shake the dust off my feet," he said ; and

when the next vestry meeting took place, the Major, who had come down on a flying visit, was instructed to place the rector's resignation before the vestry.

There was not one voice raised in protest.

"It will come much cheaper," said old Flippoto, "to have a young man who will board around."

The little church, which had of late been so poorly attended, was filled to hear the rector's last sermon. There was only one person who expected satisfaction from it: that was Mrs. Bloss. The rector had communicated to her certain portions, and they had met with her whole-souled approval.

"As we are going, I don't see as you need care whether you offend them or not. I'd let them know all about it for once, if I were you. I consider they've treated us shamefully from the very beginning, and—I'd give it to them good and loud and see how they like it."

It had been a habit with certain of the congregation to think of something else during sermon time; for not even Mr. Denning could stick to the argument that some good was to be got out of every sermon. He had tried hard, but had been forced to abandon his position and concede that there might perhaps be an exception; when the pulpit happened to be occupied by Mr. Bloss. But on this Sunday afternoon, as it was the last sermon that Mr. Bloss was to give them, there was a general feeling that as a congregation they ought to pay him the compliment of listening to it.

The text was a good one; of itself it disposed people to listen: "He that hath ears to hear let him hear."

Then the rector settled himself to his work. He told his hearers of his early enthusiasm in regard to Harmonia, and how it had been quenched; how he had expected to find an obedient flock, and had found a stiff-necked one; how he had expected his path to be full of pleasantness, and how they had sown it with thorns; how he had found stinginess instead of liberality, and sinful pride that would not be rebuked, instead of sweet humility that kissed the rod of discipline. But, he told them with iterative emphasis, a day would come when pride should be laid low. Sin had but lately flaunted itself in their midst. He had been faithful with the sinner, but his exhortations had fallen on deaf ears. How was it with that sinner now? A swift judgment had fallen on her. Let all beware lest judgment should overtake them. It was not for nothing that this terrible example was set before them. Had she hearkened to the voice of her minister she might be sitting in her place even now.

As the sermon proceeded, wonder, resentment, and indignation depicted themselves by turns on the faces of the little assemblage. Trelease and Mr. Denning felt humiliation as well. The older man sat with folded arms and a look of resignation: he had passed many a bad quarter of an hour, but all had had an ending, and so would this one. But Trelease leaned forward and hid his face in his hands. Was it possible that a man who called himself a priest of the Episcopal Church, could stand up and rail from his post of vantage as an angry woman might rail? The frightful want of taste in the proceeding gave him a sensation of disgust: and then

too he felt himself disagree with the man so strongly. Instead of accusing his flock of stinginess, he might well have commended them for liberality, considering the unfruitful seasons Harmonia had met with.

To the rest of the congregation the rector's farewell sermon was as much a surprise as though he had read the Commination Service. There was not a man or a woman there who did not mentally repel the charge of stinginess. In a general way some of them might allow that they were not quite as humble as they ought to be, being such poor miserable sinners: but who was Mr. Bloss that he should come and put his foot on their necks? And when the allusion was made to Mrs. Macfarlane—for who else should it be?—a little thrill of affectionate feeling ran through the congregation. Even Mrs. Macgregor's hard face softened, while Mrs. Ellacombe and Mary wept that such hard measure should be dealt to one who—after all—was perhaps no more a sinner than they were.

But the sermon came to an end at last; and the congregation were released. Mrs. Macgregor went as far as the door and there sat down, while the Major and Mr. Macgregor walked up the aisle towards Mr. Bloss, who had slipped off his surplice and was standing outside the Communion rails.

The rector sat down on the step, and the other two followed his example. The Major cut himself a fresh quid, and Mr. Macgregor inserted a peppermint drop between his lips, and they waited for Mr. Bloss to speak.

“I wanted to speak to you, Major, about moving,

me. Having no team, of course I depend on the parish for that."

The Major did not apprehend any difficulty in obtaining a team.

One team would not be sufficient to take his household goods, the rector said.

"Two teams then," the Major said. "How far?"

"Only as far as Junction." It was possible, Mr. Bloss said, that he might accept the charge of a city congregation.

Mrs. Macgregor waited an instant, hoping to hear the name of the city; but the Major only said "Ah," and her husband only said "Indeed"; and then the Major asked about what day the teams would be required. She reflected that she would be sure to know in a day or two whither the Bloss household was going, and she slipped out to tell what news she had, to any of the neighbours still lingering in the churchyard.

"Well," said Raine, as he tucked his wife's hand under his arm, "I always thought that man a cad; now I say he is a beastly cad."

"Oh," cried Mary; "some one may hear you, dear."

"Don't care if everybody hears me. I had a great mind to walk out of church when he began bullying that poor little woman who is in her grave."

"I thought him very cruel and unjust," said Mary; and her eyes filled again at the remembrance of it.

Then Mrs. Macgregor came up and announced that the rector was even now in treaty for a team or teams to take his household goods to Junction.

"If I could help him along with a kick, he should have the kick," quoth Raine.

Mrs. Macgregor was delighted. She went to another group to tell her news, with the addition that Mr. Raine would like to help the rector on his way with a kick.

"Look here, Mary," said Raine as they were going home, "I have a great mind I'll get into the vestry if they will elect me."

"Why?" asked Mary.

"Because then I shall have a voice in the choice of a clergyman. I tell you, Mary, if we are to have another edition of Bloss, I shall give up going to church. If I cannot have a gentleman for my clergyman, I would rather have none at all."

"I hope the next one will be a pious man;—not that I mean to say Mr. Bloss is not, but—"

"It is of the greatest possible consequence that he be a gentleman. Of course one takes his godliness for granted. That is, one wouldn't want a man who was ungodly. It is his business to be godly, of course. Depend upon it, my love, out here, it is just as it is in those islands Tregellas talks about. A missionary *may* do good, if he be a gentleman. If he be not one, he is sure to do harm."

Mary murmured something in reply; but she was secretly wondering what her parents would say to her husband's assertion that gentlemanliness should go before godliness.

Trelease walked a little behind with his wife as the people went homewards.

"I never felt so distressed in my life," he said to

Kate. Kate pressed his arm in token of sympathy. He went on, "If ever a poor soul deserved to be treated tenderly, it was Mrs. Macfarlane. I hope, for charity's sake, that Mrs. Bloss did not know what the rector was going to say. And he—let us hope that when he spoke in such condemnation he had forgotten her kindness to his wife in that dreadful time last summer."

"I wanted to get up and walk out, but I thought you might not like it," said Kate.

"It was perhaps as well that you did not; but I own that I never found it so hard to sit still. It was a very bad half hour for me, Kate, feeling as I did that the man was degrading his high office by every word he spoke. Kate, I do wish I had a chance of saying a kind word for that poor woman, as a set-off to the harsh things Mr. Bloss has thought fit to say about her."

"I am sure everybody would be glad if you would," said Kate.

Wednesday was the day fixed on by the rector for moving. He had suggested Friday, but Mrs. Bloss had declined. She did not suppose there was any ill luck in moving on a Friday, but a good many people thought there was; and there were plenty of other days to choose from.

There were two applicants for the vacant place: one a young man just ordained, the other was Trelease.

Trelease was elected by acclamation.

"It will be all right," the Major observed to Macfarlane when he came into his office from attending the vestry meeting, "Mr. Trelease will be popular, I reckon,

and that's what Harmonia wants. I'll put that in the next lot of circulars. 'Episcopal Church, English Rector.' That will be sure to tell with the Britishers. Bloss was doing all he could to pull the place down instead of building it up. If he'd stayed much longer he'd have had only Mis' Bloss to preach to. Trelease says he'll be satisfied with the four hundred for a year, and I reckon if times get more flourishing people won't mind putting their hands in their pockets. I hear lumber is looking up."

One day Trelease got a message from Mr. Denning, requesting him to go to him. He went without delay, expecting to find him ill, and was surprised to find him looking as usual.

"I will not detain you long," said the old man. "You have pleasant occupations. Ah, how pleasant the beginning of life is! I have been thinking so much lately—since I performed that ceremony for you and those other dear young people—I have been thinking so much of my own early days, when I was furnishing my own little rectory, getting shelves made to hold my books, and so forth. It was very pleasant. I have felt at times—since—long since—a kind of dumb agony that such a blight should have fallen upon me. No resentment, you understand. Oh, no, no! A dumb agony like what Samson perhaps may have felt. And I could not do even as much as he did. I could pull down no pillars to crush my enemies withal. But that is past. I have nothing to do but wait. You remember a conversation we had several months ago?"

Trelease assented.

"When Garlick came back, did you communicate to him what I had told you?"

"I did not suppose I was to do that, unless circumstances should make it impossible for you to do it yourself."

Mr. Denning was silent for a moment. "But you had another reason?"

Trelease did not answer.

"You did not feel sure whether I was quite myself?"

Trelease hesitated. "Excuse me; I wished to feel not sure. It would have been a comfort to me to know for certain that what you told me was but the imagining of a brain weakened by severe illness. But everything pointed the other way. However, there you were to speak to Mr. Garlick, or not to speak, as you chose."

"I must have spoken, had I not already spoken to you. As I had done so, I confess I felt a repugnance to opening the subject with him. It does not matter. You will have to tell him very soon. I sent for you because I wished to show you exactly where to find the documents which he will require. Please look in that bullock trunk."

Trelease opened it, and found in the midst of a chaos of papers, translations from the Persian, corrected manuscript, and so forth, the tin box he had seen before. Mr. Denning took a small key from his bunch and told him to open it. "You see the packet directed to the Bishop of ——?"

Trelease assented.

"That is what you will give to Garlick. If he objects to act, you will act. But I do not apprehend that he

will object. Pray lock the box and the bullock trunk, and keep the keys till you want them. It will be so much off my mind. One more thing; would you like my Hebrew Bible? And, do you think there would be any vanity in my leaving my books to you for the express purpose of forming the nucleus of a public library for Harmonia?"

Trelease's answer may be imagined.

"You really think I might, without vanity? Ah, you have no idea what pleasure that gives me. We brought nothing into this world, and we can carry nothing out; but if I could"—the old man spread out his arms towards the rows of heavy tomes that stood on their shelves along the walls—"if I could, I would take my books."

"I used to think," he began again, "how I should like—supposing things had been quite otherwise with me—to help in the building up of Harmonia. I did talk a good deal at one time. But when it went beyond a certain point, I always felt compelled to fall into the background. Then I thought Garlick would do something towards it. But he got tired and went off, and of course all his efforts came to nought. However, now that I have married three couples, I feel that perhaps after all I have been building better than I knew. You will help to build up Harmonia; you and Raine, and Garlick too, now that he has married that delightful Miss Luttrell.—If it is permitted to me, be sure that I shall watch over you all, and be interested in what you are doing."

Trelease begged as a favour to be allowed to stay

with him, but Mr. Denning refused gently but firmly. "I have lived alone for years," he said. "It was terrible at first, but I have got over it. I have got over everything, I think. And what can it be to die alone? Nothing, nothing—after living alone as I have done."

But he let himself be persuaded to allow Eliza and Thomas to remain in the house with him at night. And one night, not long after, the Master called him, and he was ready.

"He just said, 'Little Polly,' as if he saw somebody; and then he fell back and 'twas all over, sir," said Eliza, with her apron to her face. "He was a dear sweet gentleman," continued Eliza. "He repented of his sins, I do believe he did: and I hope he's in glory. And pray the Lord not tempt us no more than we can bear; for none of us know what poor creatures we are till we're tried."

Trelease repressed the irritation he felt at hearing her speak thus, and asked her mildly why she supposed Mr. Denning had any special sin to repent of? What did she know of Mr. Denning?

But Eliza was impenetrable. Mr. Denning had been parson of the parish next to the one in which she lived when she was a girl just put out to service.

That was all she chose to say; but Trelease suspected what she must be thinking of. When he saw Mr. Garlick (who hurried up alone from Florida), after telling him Mr. Denning's story in, as nearly as possible, Mr. Denning's own words, he mentioned Mrs. Rosevear's remarks; and asked whether it might not

be well to say something to disabuse her mind of the wrong impression she had had all these years.

Mr. Garlick knew the story in so far as the world in general knew it. The facts had been hushed up as far as possible, but the parishioners not only of Mr. Denning's parish, but of the parishes adjoining—had already got their version of the story, and had drawn their own conclusions. Mr. Garlick was deeply affected at the thought that even to this corner of the earth calumny had pursued his ill-used friend.

“And she is not a bad woman, nor a spiteful woman; very much the contrary. Poor Denning! He was not aware that I knew all about it. I cannot say it ever occurred to me that his wife was the thief; but she was a flighty, empty-headed, little country miss, and his marrying her was a great misfortune. I always felt sure that it was not he. I should be glad if you would take a public opportunity of saying a few words about him. For aught we know, other persons in this place besides Mrs. Rosevear, may be under the impression that he stole that money.”

There were few dry eyes in church the next Sunday when the rector told them how he who had just departed from amongst them had borne the burden of a sin not his own: how he had held his peace even from good words, and had borne contumely and disgrace with silent fortitude: how the sin of the man's wife had wrought irreparable ruin in his life, making all his learning, all his piety, of no effect; making what might have been a beautiful and fruitful existence, an existence sterile, degraded, full of undeserved mortifications.

Now that he was gone from his place among the living, that which was obscure was made clear: the burden of guilt might lie on the right shoulders. He besought his hearers to take warning from this sad instance, to beware how they judged others, and to keep the severity of their judgments for themselves; considering that a man knows his own sins better than any other can know them. And then he went on to speak in kindly terms of Mrs. Macfarlane; bidding his hearers abstain from judging her, and remember only her unwearied charity and kindness. He finished his sermon as he had begun it, with the words, "Judge not, that ye be not judged."

"Oh, ma'am," said Eliza to Mrs. Tregellas, with streaming eyes, "it seems like as if I wanted to go down on my knees by the dear old gentleman's grave, and beg his pardon for having thought he was a thief all these years. And yet it did seem so clear. The whole parish believed it, ma'am."

Edith could not say a word in reproach. Was Eliza the only woman who had been guided by the *vox populi*? But she was silently thankful that she had let her instinct guide her in trusting Mr. Denning.

Spring had leaped into summer when Edith had a letter from her Aunt Elizabeth, entreating her and her husband to come and see Aunt Rachel, who had been taken suddenly ill.

Miss Elizabeth thought the doctor considered the attack paralytic; but he did not say so, and she was sure Rachel would send him away if he hinted such a thing. She said it was rheumatism, and she had

herself dressed every day and placed in her chair; and attended to business as far as she could, just as if nothing was the matter with her. But oh! Miss Elizabeth feared she would never walk again: and she hoped her dear Edith would not be offended if she enclosed money for the three tickets, because it would make her extremely unhappy if Rachel died without seeing them all: and she knew she longed to see them though she had not said it in so many words.

A month later they were driving in the De Glanville carriage through the sweet Devonshire lanes towards Miss Rachel's house. Edith was looking about her and recognising with joy each familiar landmark.

"Here," she said to her husband, "Aunt Rachel's property begins. I remember her taking me out on purpose to show me."

"And you gave all this up for me!" said Harry, as they drove onward. "I wonder at my cheek in asking you to beggar yourself."

"I wouldn't say foolish things if I were you," returned Edith with her calm smile.

Miss Elizabeth met them at the hall door, in a state of tearful excitement. She seized on little Harry, and devoured him with kisses.

"Oh, what a lovely child! To think of this being yours! Edith, you must come in to Rachel at once, she has been counting the days ever since I told her you were coming."

Aunt Rachel was sitting up very straight in her chair when they went in. She embraced her niece warmly, and gave her hand in the friendliest manner to

Tregellas. She was rather an invalid just now, she said, but she hoped to be about in a few days.

"Rachel, look at Edith's boy," said Miss Elizabeth, coming forward with little Harry,

"Is this the auntie that cannot walk?" enquired the child.

"Aunt will walk when she gets well," said Edith hastily. "Perhaps aunt will let us go to our rooms now."

Miss Elizabeth accompanied her niece up stairs, to show her her room, she said. The maid was in attendance, but she dismissed her. "I'll be your maid, dear," she said. She shut the door, and came and fell on Edith's neck. "Dear Edith, you don't know what it is to see you once more, and with such a darling little boy. Oh, Edith, tell me you are happy."

"Dear Aunt Elizabeth, do I not look happy?" said Edith kissing her.

"You must be; yes, you could not help it with such a treasure, even if Mr. Tregellas were not everything that you could wish."

"But he is!" cried Edith.

"In sober truth, have you never repented your marriage?" Miss Elizabeth asked. "For I am sure you must have been dreadfully poor."

Edith laughed. "Oh yes, we were dreadfully poor, and so we shall be for a long while to come. But I have never repented my marriage."

The next day, after breakfast, Aunt Elizabeth drew her niece aside, and begged her with much significance, to let little Harry be as much as possible with Aunt

Rachel. She was afraid from words Rachel had let drop, that she had made a will which gave Edith nothing.

Edith said that what her aunt possessed was her own to do as she pleased with: but Miss Elizabeth maintained that no one had a right to be unjust. She had not said much to Rachel, for fear of doing more harm than good, but she felt very strongly about it.

"Of course, my dear, what I have will be yours when I am gone; it will not be very much. Rachel's share of the property turned out much more valuable than mine did. Ah, my dear, if I had been mistress here, do you think I would have let you go out to that dreadful place? You should have stayed here, and I should have been happy in your happiness. I could hardly sleep last night, dear, for thinking of that lovely child. What years it is since a little child belonged to this house! And to think that he belongs a little bit to me! Oh, how it does warm my heart!" said Miss Elizabeth, wiping her eyes.

"Dear auntie," said Edith, kissing her, "how I wish there had been a Harmonia for you to go to when you were young."

"Well, well, it was not to be," said Miss Elizabeth. "But we must go to Rachel. She will be in the drawing-room by this time. I hope my eyes are not red, for she is as sharp-sighted as ever."

They went in and found Miss De Glanville seated in her chair with a low table beside her spread with her Bible, her prayer-book, and the latest newspaper, ready cut and aired, and folded down at the leading article.

But Miss Rachel was not reading. In front of her stood little Harry, and he was declaiming with great earnestness :—

“ In To the Jaws of Death,
In To the Mouf of Hell,
Wode the Six Hundred.”

The two ladies listened until the child had finished his recital, and then Miss Rachel said :—

“ Now, I should like to know how much pressure had been put upon that child to make him commit such tasks to memory. He must have been whipped——”

“ He has never been whipped in his life,” Edith cried indignantly.

“ Oh yes, mamma,” said young Harry. “ Don’t you remember ?” Then addressing the company in general ; “ I pulled off my shoes and threw them out of the buggy one Sunday when we were going to church, and Papa said Discipline must Be Main Tained. And so——”

The two aunts were speechless with laughter.

“ Poor Harry ! Did you cry very much ?” said Miss Elizabeth when she could speak.

“ I cried tol-le-la-bly,” said Harry. “ But *she* cried most, and I had to kiss her ever so hard to make her stop.” He went up to his mother and began to kiss her again.

“ Precocious and spoilt,” Miss Rachel muttered, as she watched Edith fondling her boy. “ And are you never whipped, little Harry, to make you learn your lessons ?”

“ I have no lessons,” said Harry junior.

“ What were you repeating just now ?”

"That? Why that's fun! I like it. I know lots and lots of pieces. Shall I speak you a piece about Blood and Murder, and Horses!"

"No, thank you," said Miss Rachel.

"Well then, do you like a piece that makes you cry? I can say 'They walked in beauty side by side.' But that is very sad. Eliza always cries when I speak that to her."

"Harry, you are tiring your aunt," said Edith. "You must go away."

Harry sidled up to his mother. "I didn't mean to tire her. I wished to amuse her, because you said she could not run about in the garden as I could."

"He does not tire me at all," said Miss Rachel. "Come here, little Harry."

The child went up to her and smoothed her knee with his hand.

"Pretty," he said, laying his cheek on the soft velvet. "Do you know this? 'I'll bore a hole through Crummle's noase!' Thomas taught me that."

"The purest Cornish accent!" cried the old ladies, when they could speak for laughing. "What a little mimic!"

"We have not laughed so much for years," said Miss Elizabeth.

"I remember that my poor brother John was just such a mimic when he was that age," said Miss Rachael. "And—yes—I do think I see a likeness."

Miss Elizabeth went away and came back presently with a red morocco case containing a miniature. "This was brother John when he was six years old," she said.

"Older than your child, Edith, but still there is a likeness."

"It is exact," said Miss Rachel. "Ah, I was very fond of my poor brother John. How I did wish he had left a son!"

"Well," said Elizabeth, "here is his grandson, Rachel. Won't that do?"

"You know it is not the same thing. He is not a real de Glanville," said Miss Rachel sadly.

"He is real enough, as far as being Edith's boy," Miss Elizabeth persisted, "and I, at any rate, intend to be thankful for what I've got. I do not think I should have been half as fond of dear Edith if she had been a boy."

Late that night when every one had retired, Miss Elizabeth was startled by hearing her sister's bell. She threw on her dressing gown and went in. Miss Rachel was sitting up in bed muttering to herself. "Fool! Dolt! Idiot!"

"Rachel!" cried her sister, "are you ill?"

"No, but I shall be. I cannot sleep. Bring me my last will that is in the drawer there. Not that drawer. The will I made before is in that one. Now," she said, when Miss Elizabeth had brought her a folded document from the drawer she pointed out, "look at it first to be sure which it is. Is there anything about almshouses? Look midway on the fourth page."

"To be entitled and designated the De Glanville almshouses," Miss Elizabeth read with dismay at seeing in black and white intentions which she had only suspected.

"Rachel de Glanville," she said, laying the will down on the table, "how will you die in peace, if you do this wicked thing? I thought you were an upright woman. I have been proud, all my life, of your uprightness. 'If she is hard, she is just,' I have always said. And now!——"

"Stop, Elizabeth," said the elder lady. "I did not send for you at this time of night to begin a lecture. I had a right to do as I pleased with my own. Just as much right as to change my mind: which I have done."

"So much the better," said the other with severity. "Then what do you want with this?"

"I want to tear it up. I don't think I should ever have made it if I had known how like that child of Edith's was to poor John."

Miss Elizabeth handed the will to her sister, and looked on while she tore off her signature, besides tearing each sheet in halves down the middle.

"Perhaps I shall go to sleep now," said Miss Rachel. "On second thoughts—hand me my blotting book, Elizabeth, and a pen and ink."

Miss Elizabeth did as she was requested. Miss Rachel wrote on a sheet of paper for a minute or two, and then told her sister to observe that she was signing her name. "Now you witness it," she said.

"If that is a will," said Miss Elizabeth, "you require two witnesses. Shall I call back your maid?" The servant had answered the bell, but had been sent away again.

"No," answered Miss Rachel, "I do not choose ser-

vants to know my affairs. Do you witness this. It will show my intentions ; and even if I die before I get another will made, the boy will have the land. I hardly know how it would be with other things ; and in the will I have just destroyed, I had left you my sapphire set and half my plate."

"I do not care for anything, as long as you are not unjust to Edith," said Miss Elizabeth.

"Send for Talmadge in the morning," said Miss Rachel, as she laid her head on the pillow. Talmadge was her lawyer. Miss Elizabeth promised, and went back to her room ; but she was so much flurried by the thought of what her sister's intentions had been, that it was long before she slept.

Next day Mr. Talmadge was closeted with Miss Rachel for an hour. When he was gone Miss Rachel desired to speak to her niece. She told her that she had left everything to little Harry : on one condition, that he should take the name of de Glanville.

"That is not a very hard condition," said Edith.

"I would have left it to you and your husband, only he is so proud and stubborn that he might have objected to changing his name. And I do wish our name not to die out quite," said Miss Rachel.

When Edith told her husband what her aunt's intentions were, Tregellas declared he was sorry. "However, she may live long enough to change her mind fifty times," he said, "and I don't care if she does. Promise me at least, Edith, that you will never at any time let the boy know that he has any expectations. If you do, they will prove his ruin, as they have proved the ruin

of many a young fellow who might have been a sterling man, if he had had only his head and his hands to depend on."

The Tregellas had been home for some months, and Miss Rachel was talking every day of going to Aix-les-Bains for her rheumatism, when a message was brought to Tregellas one morning that two persons wished to see him.

In the servants' hall stood Thomas, Eliza with a basket on her arm, from which the black cat's head emerged, and, clinging to Eliza's arm, Frankie Macfarlane, in shabby clothes that were too small for him.

"Why, Thomas," said Tregellas as he shook hands, "slipped from your moorings again?"

"Well, sir," said Thomas, "it *du* look like it. But when a company come and offered me a thousand dollars down for the house and land just as it stood, why then I thought there was some sense in slipping moorings. And here's Frankie, sir, that was stole away. We found him starving in the street, just as we were on our way to the ship we came by. After hearing of one of they big steamers getting a hole in her, says I to 'Liza, 'I am going in a sailing vessel, and then we may get home, if we do take a little longer about it.' So we found a vessel that was bound to Bristol with a cargo of lumber; and we could do no other than take Frankie with us. And now I'll hand him over to you, sir."

Frankie's adventures would take a volume to tell, and this is not the time or place for them.

Eliza took her earliest opportunity of speaking to Mrs. Tregellas in private.

"If you please, ma'am, would you put this in a safe place. It's Thomas's last will and testament, ma'am. He wrote down that I was to have everything he left, and I took and wrote down that Master Harry was to have everything I left."

"You must not do that, Eliza," said Edith. "You have relatives."

"Yes, ma'am, so I have; an idle, drunken lot, that would ha' drained us dry, if we would ha' let 'em, before we went to America; and that'll do the same if we let 'em, now we've come back. No! They ain't going to have what me and my man have worked so hard for. And if you won't have it, why, I'll give it to the hospitals. But do 'ee take it, my dear; now do'ee, for that blessed little dear. An' the Lord knows how many brothers an' sisters he mayn't be spared to have."

Tregellas was talking of going back to Harmonia, when he received a letter from the company which had bought Thomas's little place, making an offer for his land; and for the hillside which stood in his wife's name. There were strong indications of iron in all the land round there, and the company proposed sinking a shaft where Thomas's land joined the hillside. Edith smiled. "They offer me a hundred pounds for what cost me fifty. What do you say, Harry?"

Tregellas was in a brown study. "If Harmonia is to become a mining place, I do not see how we could live there. And to have a mining shaft, and engines going,

and worse than that, a mining population, almost at our door !—”

“It would spoil our Eden,” said Edith mournfully.

But if the Tregellases were sorry to give up the place they had made, Harmonia saw, in the advent of this mining company, some gleams of the prosperity it so sorely needed. The Colonel sold the land on which he had had his tea nursery, and a big boarding-house rose up mushroom-like, and will remain perhaps until it is burnt down. The Colonel is not in low spirits about his failure. He does not think he dropped very much money in the experiment, and he is now deeply absorbed in the problem of making sugar from sorghum cane, which, as the Major assures him, can be done at a cost of two cents a pound. The Colonel has his table full of books and pamphlets, and is reading up the subject very carefully; and the Major puts paragraphs once a month into the *Mugwump*, to tell everybody that the Colonel is about shortly to grasp a fortune, and that he is one of the foremost citizens in Harmonia.

One day, a year later, Raine, who had set up a market-waggon, and had just disposed of a varied assortment of country produce, went to the post-office as usual, on his way home, to get his English paper.

As he approached the door he observed the post-master standing in the middle of the store, with his wife and daughter close to him in an attitude of the deepest attention. He was standing so that the light

fell on something which he held in his hand. It was a post-card, Raine saw, and he was spelling out the contents for the women's benefit. Raine stood where he was, and heard as follows:—

“Chinquapin College.

“DEAR RAINE,—

“I WROTE you some time since that I had commenced a theological course here with a view to entering the ministry, as I feel sure that I shall do much better as a clergyman than as a farmer, and it is not putting into the land all the time and not knowing whether you will get anything out, as is the case with a farmer. I do not expect any difficulty in getting a parish. If Harmonia is on the look-out for a minister about the time I get ordained, you might drop me a line, and I could apply for it. I know I should be more popular than old Bloss was. I am engaged, and intend to be married the day after I am ordained. It is a profound secret at present, so please do not mention it.

“Yours,

“HUIH.”

“Going to be married! I wish he'd said who to,” cried the two women together. “What a pretty handwriting!”

“There's something more,” said the postmaster. “Durned if I can make it out.”

Raine stepped inside. “If you will hand me the card, perhaps I shall be able to make it out.”

The postmaster's wife and daughter shrieked and vanished. The postmaster stood his ground. His whole bearing was that of the Government official who says, "Well what are you going to do about it?"

Nevertheless he was not sorry to get himself behind the cupboard and pretend to search diligently for letters.

Meanwhile Raine read at his ease the words which had baffled the postmaster.

"Αμ αυφυλλ αρδ υπ ολδ βοι. Λενδ μη α φινερ, Τιλλ ρηπα'υ νεξτ μονθ σερταιν."

THE END.

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